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CREATIVE THESIS: UNTITLED SCREENPLAY

by

Lora Herman

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

In

University Honors

And

Film

Thesis Advisor

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Introduction

In light of the “me too” era, in which society’s misrepresentation and dismissal of sexual harassment and sexual assault is rising to the surface of our socio-political discourse, I looked to film and television for fictional versions of the stories I was reading about in the news, media, and message boards. Yet, I found it difficult to find any films or television shows that did not perpetuate harmful, incorrect myths around how any of these acts — specifically rape — occur in real life. Certainly, fiction is fiction. Films and television have no obligation to the truth. However, as a person who uses film and television to provoke my own thought, I believe that the type of narrative I was searching for should exist. This is what I sought out to create in my thesis screenplay — a narrative that attempts to subvert how rape and rapists are traditionally represented in film and television.

In the rare film that depicts a dis-ambiguous rape (a rape that is often violent or of an incapacitated victim, thus incontestable by the audience) the rapist is often a stranger to the victim, as depicted in: *Irreversible* (2002), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), and *Wind River* (2017). In each of these films, the rapists use extreme, brutal violence to apprehend their victim. Though attacks like these do happen, they account for a lesser percentage than intimate or casual acquaintance attackers. According to fivethirtyeight.com, out of 100 incidents of rape, 33 were intimate attackers, 39 were casual acquaintance attackers, and 19 were strangers. The same website states that only 11% of cases involve a weapon (Wolfe, Julia, et al.). What we have come to understand now is that many cases of rape occur when the victim is unable to give consent or does not provide clear, enthusiastic consent. The latter situation is type of rape I aimed to allude

to in the events of this story.

Summary

In 2082 North America, the United States no longer exists as a governing entity. The vast majority of the landscape that once comprised the USA is unlivable due to irreparable advances in climate change — flood, fire, freeze, and drought. The remaining society has restructured itself to focus less on controlling its population and their free will, and to instead focus on maintaining the integrity of and resources for the man-made contained communities that allow them to continue living a somewhat normal life. Prior to this point in time, criminals have lost all of their human rights and therefore do not initially benefit from the new society's encouragement of free will. Criminals are made to live in urbanized areas — areas that are nearly unlivable due to climate change — either exposed to the elements or in hiding underground. They exist with little to no governance, just like those living in the communities outside of the city. As the new society progresses, they decide to reintegrate criminals of reproductive age into their communities in order to enhance the likelihood of population regeneration. For a criminal to become a member of society with free will, they must be “claimed” by a non-criminal. This screenplay follows the story of, “The Man”, a criminal who is admitted into the reintegration program.

References

Wolfe, Julia, et al. “What We Know About Victims Of Sexual Assault In America.”

FiveThirtyEight, 2 Jan. 2018, projects.fivethirtyeight.com/sexual-assault-victims/.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Open on THE MAN. As he is a criminal, he has been stripped of his name. This is our main character, he is in his late 20's and is neither definitively caucasian nor a person of color, average to tall in height, but not attractive or unattractive. His clothes are plain, dark in color and well worn, but neat enough to wear to dinner at Outback Steakhouse.

Were he not to speak, he is the kind of guy one might shrug their shoulders about. He is unremarkable in any visual sense.

The Man sits at a table, facing an unseen interviewer.

Looks like an interrogation room, expect its not. The setting and mood is the DMV meets therapy -- white walls, cold colored fixtures and minimal furniture, bad lighting.

A FEMALE INTERVIEWER's voice sounds over the image of The Man.

FEMALE INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

What kind of person are you?

The Man speaks clearly and audibly. He might seem to be mentally distant, avoiding the demand of the present, but this is not the case.

He is hyper-analyzing the questions and though he inserts uncertainty into the interview, he is not acting uncertain.

THE MAN

What kind? It's not as if all people fit into one of a few definitive categories. Depending on your perspective, there could be either infinite kinds of people, or no kinds at all.

FEMALE INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Answer then instead, what defines you? What would you want a stranger to know about you above anything?

The Man pauses, contemplating.

THE MAN

I'm not special in any way. I'm simply existing.

FEMALE INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Does that make you happy, being
unremarkable?

The Man shrugs.

THE MAN
I'm a product of my circumstance.
Being unremarkable is more a mode
of survival than a mode of
happiness.

FEMALE INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Do you feel that your circumstance -
- your imprisonment here -- is
justified?

THE MAN
I see why I and others like me . .

She interjects.

FEMALE INTERVIEWER
Criminals.

The Man avoids her definition.

THE MAN
--Why we needed to remain separate
from the rest of what's left of
humanity, at least for a little
while. But now it seems that
justice has run its course.

A pause.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
It's time for a fair
chance.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - CONTINUOUS

The same image of The Man sitting at the table surfaces on a
television screen, as recorded footage of his interview is
relayed to a monitor at a secondary location.

Though the OBSERVER is unseen, their hands make notes on a
form as The Man continues.

THE MAN
That's why I'm here. For the chance
to prove that I am ready.

FEMALE INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
And you believe you can prove to be reformed through this process?

THE MAN
The goal here is to show that I am a different person than I was before -- and I am. I just need a change of scenery.

FEMALE INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Are you willing to adopt new behaviors in order to achieve this?

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The image returns to The Man inside the interview room in real time.

THE MAN
I have no doubt I'll adapt.

FEMALE INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Last question, how do you know you will be different by the end of this program?

THE MAN
I don't think I could know, but I can imagine it.

INT. OUTPATIENT ROOM - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Blood fills a syringe, a MEDIC removes the needle of the syringe from The Man's arm, setting the vile of his blood next to other fluid samples -- urine, sperm.

This room is much like the one before it, except larger, and instead of a table and chairs, it has two rows of examination beds, each with a corresponding Medic and patient.

The Man sits on his bed, waiting.

The Medic is covered from head to toe in beige and white clothing - pants, shirt, white nursing shoes, lab coat, balaclava.

They input information into a touchscreen tablet.

THE MAN
What's all this for anyways?

The Medic does not respond.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
(cooly)
That's not how you make friends you
know.

The Medic grabs a small taser-like device.

MEDIC
Please raise your arm.

The Man complies, and the Medic swiftly ZAPS The Man in the
upper arm.

The Man winces slightly, reluctantly.

THE MAN
And neither is that.

Instead of drawing blood, this device has branded him with an
INDICATION. The number 727478 glows red on his skin.

The Man examines the area tenderly with his fingers.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
What was that?

MEDIC
An indication mark. It allows us to
keep track of you.

The Medic takes a scanning device and aims it at The Man's
arm to demonstrate. A BEEP indicates recognition.

THE MAN
(under his breath)
Wow . . .

The Medic hands The Man an unremarkable backpack with a few
items.

MEDIC
Everything you need -- instructions
on how to proceed, a first aid kit
and a pay card with enough credits
to obtain supplies for your journey.

The Medic gathers the samples, and walks away.

THE MAN
Thanks, friend.

The Man opens the bag and examines its contents. A paper falls to the ground unnoticed, as he pulls out the pay card.

Slim and palm sized like a credit card, its surface animated with a cartoon advertisement for 'fresh' food, and culminates in the logo CITY MART.

EXT. CITY STREETS - SAME DAY

The Man steps out of a nondescript building onto the street.

This city is familiar to the eye like one existing in 2019, yet it is the year 2082.

Climate change advance has affected the United States across the country. Devastating wildfires and pollution to the West and Southwest, a rise in sea levels to the South and Southeast, below zero temperatures and frost to the North and Northeast, and, suffering the least, drought and high-winds in the mid and Northwest.

This city lies under a layer of filth and destruction developed by many years of unchecked population density, wealth disparity, and environmental neglect.

-Loose trash piling up on the streets

-Roads, sidewalks, and a few buildings are roped off due to neglected earthquake damage

-Any plant life in sight is wilted and dark; appearing near death, if not already

It is important that the landscape is not destroyed, simply forgotten. No nuclear devastation, or zombie apocalypse here, any derelict aspect of this city is humanity's responsibility.

It is quiet. Oddly so for a city. The Man is seemingly the street's sole occupant.

The air is clouded with orange-tinged fog - pollution - making visibility difficult. The Man raises a scarf to his mouth and nose to minimize inhalation.

He walks up the street, passing a few long abandoned cars. A lone advertisement, similar in aesthetic to that of his pay card, shines on a billboard up the street from him. The Man regards the message as he passes.

INSERT - BILLBOARD ADVERTISEMENT

An audio message blares over corresponding imagery --

"Imagine a better life for yourself, your crimes forgiven and forgotten . . ."

Smiling images of people tending to crops and farm animals appear on the screen while the unseen voice continues.

"... Are you of fair health and reproductive ability? Apply today to our criminal reform trial program . . ."

Now, an image of a couple holding a child, the couple smiling down at The Man.

"... Become a member of the outer communities, and live a life free of your past. Join us in the production of our future."

BACK TO SCENE

The Man continues down the street.

EXT. CITY MART - LATER

The Man approaches a storefront with the same CITY MART sign shown on his pay card. The windows and doors are barred, and the electronic lock on the door handle blinks red, indicating it is engaged.

The Man hovers his pay card over the lock, the light flicks green and the door buzzes. He pushes the door open.

INT. CITY MART - CONTINUOUS

The Man walks into the store. The wealth of food compared to the state of the city outside is jarring.

The bright lights of the store shine down on rusted cans, hand-bundled produce, and jars of jellies and milk reminiscent of a farmer's market booth.

The Man squints his eyes, adjusting to the bright light.

Several others are already in the store, gathering -- and grazing on -- their food and supplies like kids in a candy store.

MAN #2, a good time Charlie in his mid-20's, spots The Man, recognizing him, and raises his hand in a wave.

MAN #2

Hey! You got the golden ticket too?

Man #2 slaps The Man on the back in a jovial manner. This is clearly too comfortable for The Man's taste.

THE MAN
Seems that's the case.

MAN #2
Great! We're almost done, but we'll wait for you before we head to the train.

THE MAN
Sure, how much should I get anyway?

MAN #4 (20s), a serious, brooding type, chimes in.

MAN #4
They say however much you can carry. Help yourself.

THE MAN
Okay . . .

The Man turns to collect his items.

He holds an old-looking can of peas in his hand like a cherished childhood toy. It has been a while since he has seen such foods.

He begins loading food into his somewhat empty backpack.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
Sorry, you said something about a train?

MAN #2
Can't read can ya?

Man #2 and his friends chuckle. The Man, defensive, starts to retort.

THE MAN
I can --

MAN #2
Ah, sorry, the excitement's getting to me.

The Man's face softens. MAN #3, early 20's; more reserved than Man #2, answers The Man's question.

MAN #3
The letter, in your bag. It says they're gonna tow us outta here on the old subway.

The Man stops and shifts items around in his bag, searching.

THE MAN
I think I've misplaced mine.

MAN #3
Take mine if you'd like, our copies
are all the same.

EXT. CITY STREETS - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

The newly formed group walks down the street. Wind has picked up, causing the thick air to be more of a nuisance than it had been earlier.

The Man, wearing his backpack, holds a scarf firmly to his mouth and nose with one hand and holds his borrowed copy of instructions in the other, reading as they walk.

INSERT - INSTRUCTIONS

Reader, congratulations on your acceptance into this trial. Soon, you will be transported from the city to the country. Until then, there are a few tasks you must complete...

The Man stops reading.

BACK TO SCENE

They pass a sad sight. A line of middle aged and elderly people, mostly men, waiting to receive their food rations.

The line, like that of ants going in and out of their hill home, spills from an opening into the ground up to the tent containing the rations.

The group observes them.

MAN #3
I will not miss that.

MAN #2
Hold up, I'm gonna say goodbye to
an old friend.

Man #2 jogs goes over to one of the men in line and embraces him as if he were an uncle or mentor.

The Man's attention shifts to the rest of the people in line, their faces and attitudes sunken. He makes eye contact with one of them. The OLDER CRIMINAL looks at The Man and smiles.

Man #2 rejoins the group and they begin to depart. The Man hesitates.

THE MAN
I'll catch up.

The others start off, while The Man approaches the older criminal, pulling a few of the food items out of his backpack and handing them to him. The older criminal takes them, grateful, and nods in thanks to The Man.

The Man turns to catch up with the group ahead.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNELS - EVENING

The group descends into a dimly lit subway tunnel. It is clear it has been a long time since it was in use.

A few dozen people in their 20's to early 30's sit communally on the subway platform. Some chat softly in small groups and snack on food, while others sit alone in silence.

The general tone is pleasant, but tired.

Glaringly absent from the crowd is any substantial presence of women, with the exception of two. The first, WOMAN #1, early 20's; dark hair, is one of those sitting alone, brooding over a book.

The second, WOMAN #2, early 30's; blonde, with a kind face, sits in one of the small groups. She smiles faintly as she converses with her group.

The Man focuses on Woman #1. As the others in his group greet others they are familiar with, The Man walks over to her.

She barely stirs as he reaches her, and still does not react when he sits cross legged next to her.

THE MAN
Hello.

Woman #1 does not reply, not even a glance. She continues reading.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
What are you reading?

She pauses, then releases her held breath in preparation for her snarky response.

WOMAN #1
Couldn't you just look at the cover?

THE MAN

I suppose, but that's no way to
start a conversation with a
stranger.

WOMAN #1

(tersely)

Then maybe you shouldn't.

THE MAN

Shouldn't what? Look at the cover
of your book?

For the first time, she raises her gaze from her book,
snapping it closed, and looks The Man in the eyes.

WOMAN #1

No, *maybe* you shouldn't start a
conversation.

THE MAN

Ah . . .

There's an awkward pause, she holds her gaze for a second
before opening her book again.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

I knew that's what you meant. I
just wanted to see if you cared
enough to explain it to me.

WOMAN #1

I don't care. Now, I'd like to be
left alone.

THE MAN

Alone? Hmm . . .

Woman #1 rolls her eyes.

WOMAN #1

What now?

The Man shifts to come to his feet.

THE MAN

It just seems strange that, you,
who wants to be left alone so
badly, are willing to be partnered
to someone else indefinitely.

WOMAN #1

Yeah, wouldn't anyone if it meant
cleaner air and better food?

THE MAN
Without a doubt . . .

Satisfied, Woman #1 once again returns to reading.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
. . . But the companionship won't
hurt either.

She keeps her gaze down towards her book as he walks away.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNELS - LATER

Conversations simmer down as the subway train screeches up to the platform, a CLUNK sound echos as the train comes to a complete halt. Everyone looks at the machine, expectantly, but not really knowing what to expect.

Three automatic doors creak open, a sound unlike the familiar swoosh of sliding doors.

From there, seven people emerge, each cleaner looking than those waiting on the platform. They are all dressed in practical looking beige, brown, grey and sage clothing, with loose, scarf-like coverings over their head and neck.

One of the seven steps forward, while the other six position themselves two at each of the three doors. The one who has stepped forward is COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1, early 40's.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1
Hello everyone. Thank you for your
patience. If you would form a line
at each door, we will begin to
board you onto the train.

People shuffle quietly to form lines at the doors as instructed. The Man and his companions in one line, Woman #1 in a different one. The Man occasionally glances to her, but she does not appear to notice or look at him.

The Man is towards the end of the line, thus cannot see well what is happening towards the front. It is apparent that each person is being stopped before boarding the train.

MAN #3
What do you think they're doing?

MAN #2

Probably checking to make sure we
look right, I mean, sure we're
great on paper, but next thing they
find out some idiot has a swastika
tattooed on his neck . . .

THE MAN

I think they're scanning us.

The Man gestures to the reddish area on his arm where he had
been pricked.

MAN #3

Like cattle? Great. That feels
great.

By now, they've reached the front of the line.

Man #3 steps up first, and, surely enough, they use a hand-
held cellphone-like device to scan his upper arm. The device
makes a pleasant BEEP and emits a soft green light. The
screen facing the Community Organizer shows Man #3's face and
other indiscernible information.

Then, in the sea of sound created by the same pleasant beeps,
one sounds differently, indicating a negative result. This
attracts the attention of The Man and Man #2 as Man #2 is
about to be scanned.

They see CRIMINAL #1 at the front of one of the other lines
who has been stopped. Two Community Organizers from the line,
and Community Organizer 1 speak to Criminal #1 hushed and
sternly.

Criminal #1 is clearly agitated, and begins to raise their
voice in protest.

As Criminal #1's demeanor escalates to aggressive, Community
Organizer 1 takes the same cellphone-like device and presses
it into Criminal #1's side. On contact, a loud ZAP, and
Criminal #1 falls to the ground.

Man #2 proceeds to be scanned, causing another BEEP and green
light.

MAN #2

Holy shit.

The Man, still staring at Criminal #1 lying on the ground,
does not notice that he is next.

Community Organizer 2 clears their throat, irritated.

The Man's trance breaks, and he steps forward.

THE MAN
Sorry -- what's . . .

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 2
Arm please.

The Man raises his arm to be scanned.

THE MAN
What's going to happen to them?

BEEP, green light. The Man lowers his arm.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 2
They were not fit for selection.
They will remain in the city.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

The Man boards the train, and sees Woman #1 boarding the train at the far end. He takes a seat next to Man #2 and Man #3.

The last few people board the train and the doors creak closed.

As the train slowly begins to depart, Criminal #1 begins to get to their feet, and stands watching the train as it moves further into the tunnel. The Man keeps their gaze through the window until they are no longer in view.

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

The interior of the train, like the city exterior, is unwelcoming.

-Faded advertisements

-Dull and rusted metal panelling and handrails

-Fabric on the seats torn and lacking the once rich pigments

-The fluorescent bars of light on the ceiling project a green tinted light.

Some of the passengers sleep. The Community Organizers do their best to stay awake, one at each end of the three train cars.

The one positioned closest to Woman #1, COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 3, fights the pull of tiredness, but soon dozes off.

A few of the men sitting across the aisle from Woman #1 take notice to her. Glancing at her, then exchanging glances with each other. Smiling and giggling -- maliciously.

One of them, CRIMINAL #2, leans forward.

CRIMINAL #2
(whispering)
Hey, hey you, sugarplum.

Woman #1 glances at him, brow furrowed, and then back to where she had been previously zoning out.

Down the aisle, The Man observes this interaction.

CRIMINAL #2 (CONT'D)
Don't be shy, I'm just trying to
talk to you. You seem much nicer to
talk to than most of these guys.

She continues to look away.

CRIMINAL #2 (CONT'D)
What got you to the city in the
first place? Did ya catch yer
boyfriend with someone? Or better
yet, your girlfriend!

The men all chuckle together, Woman #1, flushed, stands to find another seat. As she walks past them, they reach out and grab her, tossing her amongst themselves like a doll.

The Man, who had already begun walking towards the commotion, grabs Woman #1, moving her to the side away from the men.

CRIMINAL #2 (CONT'D)
Hey! We're trying to have a good
time here.

THE MAN
I can see that, leave her out of
it.

CRIMINAL #2
Maybe we don't want to.

THE MAN
I'm sorry to hear it, but we're
going to walk away now.

The Man and Woman #1 turn to walk back to where The Man had been sitting.

CRIMINAL #2
(yelling)
Hey!

The previously asleep Community Organizer 3 is awakened by the shout, and steps towards Criminal #2.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 3
Please calm down and take a seat.

Criminal #2 complies, but does not appear happy to do so.

The Man and Woman #1 take their seats near The Man's (still sleeping) companions. Woman #1 still disturbed by the encounter.

WOMAN #1
This does not mean I have to talk
to you now.

The Man smiles slightly.

THE MAN
I know.

Woman #1 shoots him a dirty look, stands, and sits a few seats away. The Man closes his eyes and drifts off to sleep.

INT. TRAIN - MORNING

The Man and the other passengers are jolted awake by the train coming to a full stop.

EXT. RURAL SUBWAY STATION - MORNING

The passengers spill out onto the street as they ascend the stairwell from the subway platform below. The area they emerge onto appears to be an unfinished station.

At the surface, they see a long roadway disappearing at either end on the horizon. Across the roadway, there is a gated community, standing in the middle of no where.

The gated community appears to be fifty or sixty houses deep, and thirty to forty wide. In the center, a bubble like structure reaches a hundred feet into the sky, towering over the rooftops.

The ground that is not covered in road or houses is hard, beige dirt. Barely, if any, plant or animal life can be seen.

When the last of them reaches the surface level, the Community Organizers guide the group in the direction of the gated community.

EXT. GATED COMMUNITY - CONTINUOUS

The group walks down the street, towards the bubble, passing long abandoned houses.

Abandoned toys or gardening equipment are skewed across the now dead grass of their front yards. A broken window here and there, peeling paint.

Of note -- each house they pass has a large red "X" spray painted across its front door.

They reach the edge of the bubble structure -- the community -- and can discern through the warped semi-clear material more houses, and bright colors.

A large entryway opens to allow the group into the decontamination area between the outside and the inside. As the exterior doors shut behind them, the mirror image interior doors open.

Inside the community, which consists of houses spanning three streets wide and fifteen houses long, there is grass that is green, and an amateur moat-like stream bordering the sidewalks.

Up against the walls on all sides are trellis like structures with dense vines climbing up all sides. Loose netting covers the remaining wall and ceiling space that the vines cannot reach.

The supporting arches of the dome have tubes that trace from the ground to the ceiling, carrying water to create artificial rain. Similarly, rods of light border the tubes, creating artificial sunlight.

Immature trees line the divide between each house. In the front of each house, the yards are fenced in, each house's accommodations varying to host a different type of small or medium size farm animal: pigs, chickens, goats, etc.

A larger building in the center stands out. Originally intended to be an activities space for those living in the community -- game room, computer room, swimming pool, etc. -- The building is now the Community Center, the physical representation of this particular community's "government".

The group heads towards the Community Center.

INT. MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

One of the larger rooms inside of the Community Center has been cleared to serve as a meeting room. It has the remnants of decor from its previous use - game room - that gives it a nostalgic quality.

The Community Organizers guide the newcomers into the room, and gesture for them to take a seat in the rows of fold-up chairs.

Community Organizer 1 walks to the front of the room.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

Before we take you to your temporary homes, we must explain the exact conditions of your presence here.

Pause.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1 (CONT'D)

You are still criminals, and as such you are not permitted to leave your homes without supervision.

All records of your previous crimes will be erased if a free community member decides to claim you.

If you are not claimed in three months, you will be returned to the city.

The crowd grows tense.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1 (CONT'D)

We believe a necessary component of this process becoming successful is that the specific nature of your past crimes is kept confidential.

A few people in the crowd appear relieved.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1 (CONT'D)

Introducing more people of reproductive age into our community is a healthy way to make consistent population regeneration a new reality. Be sure -- this does not mean we require that you reproduce.

(MORE)

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1 (CONT'D)

Our role in the relationships that you form here, or in your lives moving forward, is purely that of a moderator. That being said, relationships of a romantic or sexual manner are only to occur between yourselves and those who already belong to our community.

You may not have relationships of that nature with one another.

The Man looks across the room at Woman #1. She does not notice him.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1 (CONT'D)

We will organize times in which you can get to know the people of the community under our supervision.

Outside of those times, you will be obligated to assist in labor that is necessary to support our community and others.

Should you break any rules, additional labor will be assigned to you.

Finally, and this is perhaps of utmost importance, if, once you have been claimed, your or your partner commits a community violation, you will both be made to return to the city.

Any questions?

Pause.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1 (CONT'D)

Okay, now, you will be taken to your new homes here. Stay there tonight and tomorrow morning to get adjusted. Tomorrow evening we'll have our first group gathering.

INT. HOME - DAY

The Man, Man #2, Man #3, MAN #4, and Woman #1 are assigned to share a home together. Woman #1 enters the house ahead of the men, heading straight upstairs.

MAN #2
Well, now isn't this nice?

Man #2 enters one of the downstairs bedrooms.

INT. MAN #2 ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Man #2 jumps on the bed, throwing his bag to the ground. He kicks his shoes off with his heels.

MAN #2
(mocking)
I "claim" this bed, in the name of
me!

INT. HOME - CONTINUOUS

The Man, Man #3 and Man #4 exchange grins. Man #4 walks to the room across the hall.

MAN #4
I guess this is me.

MAN #3
(to The Man)
Let's see what's left upstairs.

The Man and Man #3 head upstairs.

The first door to the left is shut, but the one across it to the right remains open.

The Man enters the open door. Man #3 passes, heading down the hall.

INT. THE MAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Man pauses to take in the room.

Conservatively decorated, but welcoming. To him, it is the height of luxury. He begins opening the drawers in the desk to inspect their contents.

Then, the door to the room across the hall opens.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Woman #1 emerges in a change of clothing, carrying her bag. She heads down the staircase towards the front door.

The Man goes quickly to the hall.

THE MAN
Where are you going?

Woman #1, in her usual fashion, ignores him and continues out the front door. He turns and walks back up the hall to the room at the end.

INT. MAN #3'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door is open, Man #3 sits on his bed, reading.

THE MAN
Hey, did she tell you where she was going?

Man #3, uninterested, barely raises his eyes.

MAN #3
Nope.

The Man pauses, waiting for more of a reaction. Then he turns to walk out. Now, Man #3 shifts his attention.

MAN #3 (CONT'D)
You might as well give up on that, you know.

THE MAN
Give up on what?

MAN #3
Her, it's not gonna happen.

THE MAN
I don't know what you're talking about.

INT. KITCHEN - THAT EVENING

The Man heads downstairs to the kitchen where he finds Man #2 and #4.

Random cans and food items -- retrieved from the store -- are strewn about the countertops, as the two men graze chaotically.

THE MAN
You guys aren't really eating everything you brought?

MAN #2

Seems like this place has plenty to go around, and I'm hungry.

MAN #4

Second that.

THE MAN

We don't know that. We really don't know much at all, other than what we can and can't do while we're here.

MAN #2

Perhaps we take a look around, figure it out for ourselves.

MAN #4

Isn't that one of the things we can't do?

THE MAN

It's not a bad idea.

Man #4 rolls his eyes.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Better for us to know some of what they know -- anything that they wouldn't want to tell us.

MAN #2

Right. And it's not like we can't do it, we just aren't supposed to. Just because you're not supposed to piss your pants, doesn't mean you can't.

MAN #4

Alright, thanks for the grammar lesson, but count me out. I like it here and I plan to stay.

MAN #2

You'd just get us caught anyways.
(to The Man)
You in?

THE MAN

Definitely.

EXT. COMMUNITY - LATE EVENING

The Man and Man #2 cautiously exit their home. No other person is in sight. If they didn't know better, they would think it was a ghost town.

Though dark outside of the bubble, it is dimly lit on the inside by soft orange tinged lights, emitted from the ceiling and sides of the bubble structure.

They walk up the street with no clear objective. The animals stir in the yards as they pass them, but do not make enough noise to alert anyone of their presence.

The Man spots, through the rows of houses, the main building they had been brought to when they first arrived.

THE MAN
(whispering)
Hey!

Man #2 stops and looks towards The Man, who gestures towards the community center. Man #2 nods, and they head in that direction, sneaking between and behind houses in a "zig zag" manner.

EXT. NALA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They pass a house with a light in the window. The Man stops to look, and gestures to Man #2 to go ahead.

Looking through the window, The Man sees four people playing a board game. They are NALA, CHARLIE, ROSS, and MANU. They smile and laugh, like a family.

The Man, fixated on these people -- Nala in particular -- does not notice as two of the Community Organizers approaches, one dragging Man #2 by his arm.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1
(grabbing The Man's arm)
Hey! Adventure time is over. We're taking you two back to where you belong.

The Community Organizers escort The Man and Man #2 down the street, when water begins to sprinkle down on them from above. Both The Man and Man #2 appear confused, almost scared, as water dampens their hair and clothing.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 2

Pretty cool huh? They're early generation drones with only a rudimentary sprinkler system and small water tank. Voila! You've got rain.

MAN #2

What's the point of doing it at night? To make me freeze to death?

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

Though that's a welcome side effect, we find it makes for a nice crisp morning.

The Man watches above him as several drones buzz overhead -- right, left and back again, like they're mowing an invisible lawn.

EXT. HOME - CONTINUOUS

The Community Organizers walk The Man and Man #2 to the door of their home, pausing at the threshold.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

Just to make sure you don't find yourself tempted to wander around on your own again, we're putting you on a labor rotation tomorrow morning. Consider this your warning. Next time, we'll have you placed in a solitary living situation.

The Man and Man #2 step into the house.

INT. HOME - CONTINUOUS

MAN #2

In this solitary living situation, would we get the same food because this stuff is--

The Community Organizers maintain their cold attitudes. The Mad side eyes Man #2. Man #2 senses the mood.

MAN #2 (CONT'D)

. . .Alright, we're hearing you loud and clear.

The Community Organizers turn to walk away, The Man shuts the door.

THE MAN

Do you ever consider keeping your mouth shut or?

MAN #2

Hey! I was trying to get on their good side, it's not my fault if they have no sense of humor.

THE MAN

Uhuh.

MAN #2

Let's see you try sugaring them up.

The Man, already heading upstairs, simply chuckles in response.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Man passes Woman #1's room. Her door is wide open, and she sits on the bed reading.

THE MAN

They caught you too huh?

Woman #1 snaps her book closed, setting it on the bed.

WOMAN #1

No, because, unlike you guys, I know how to go unnoticed.

THE MAN

(mildly surprised)

You're kidding . . .

Woman #1 walks to the doorway.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

You don't think you could teach me how to--

She closes the door in his face.

INT. HOME - EARLY MORNING

In the early hours of the morning - still dark outside - The Man is shaken awake by one of the Community Organizers.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The Man and Man #2 shuffle sleepily into the same meeting room they had been in the day prior and are guided to their seats by the Community Organizers that woke them.

Around ten people are already there. This time none of these people are criminals or Community Organizers, they're regular members of the Community. Among them are COREY (24), an average joe, ISAAC (26), gym rat, and ALVIN (23), a nervous, sinewy type.

Standing at the front of the room are PAUL (30), and MARY (30). They seem to be the leaders in the group, with a tough but approachable quality to each of them.

MARY

Looks like everyone is here, so
let's get started.

PAUL

Newcomers, welcome. I'm Paul and
that's Mary. We're responsible for
this community's contribution to
the unified labor efforts.

MARY

Let's get some logistics straight.

Paul turns down the lights, and turns on a projector. An image resembling the United States without its standard state borders appears on the screen.

PAUL

For those of you joining us for the
first time today, here is our
working map of ground covered.
Groups from each of the communities
have been collectively searching
all structures in the unclaimed
zones, ring by ring starting at the
edge of their community going
outward.

The image on the screen animates, showing a series of red circles increasing out from each community's border.

MARY

As you can see, our outermost
circle is now touching one of the
hazard zones in the south.

PAUL

Today, we're going to make our second attempt at clearing out one of the buildings on the edge of that zone, so prepare yourselves.

MARY

We have a pack for each of you with anything you'll need.

PAUL

You should go ahead and change now, trust me it will be a lot nicer here than when we get there.

Paul and Mary pass around beat-up backpacks. Inside each is a wetsuit and goggles.

Everyone begins to strip and climb into their wetsuits. The Man pulls the wetsuit out of his bag. On the collar in sharpie reads: DAVID.

The Man looks down at the collar. He pauses for a moment before taking a sharpie out of his own pocket and writing "I'M NOT" in front of "DAVID".

EXT. HAZARD ZONE SOUTHEAST - LATER

The group arrives in two self-driving trucks. The usual dust in the air is now fog, and off in the distance, there is a suggestion of scattered buildings like ghosts in the grey.

The trucks pull off of the road. The men exit the truck; mosquitoes swarm the air.

With little discussion, Paul and Mary begin unloading oxygen tanks and a medium sized paddle boat from the trunks. Alvin twitches, trying poorly to avoid contact with the mosquitoes; Isaac swats the air.

THE MAN

So, we're here?

MARY

Not quite, we'll hoof it the rest of the way.

PAUL

(gesturing to the tanks)
Alright boys, everyone carries their own.

MARY

Paul and I'll carry the boat.

They carry the boat above their head pirate style, while the others struggle with the weight of their oxygen tanks.

The group walks, mostly silently. Their dark colored wetsuits poking strangely through the fog. They begin passing houses, crumbled and dark in the windows. No one's lived there in a long time.

They begin to make out a partially submerged city in the distance, high rises eerily peeking out from water that runs a hundred feet deep.

A nouveau beach of debris and mud leads into the murky temperate water ahead of them. Paul and Wes stop, lowering the boat to the ground.

The others stop too, waiting for direction. Paul and Mary guide the boat into the edge of the water. Paul climbs in, while Mary holds the boat steady.

Without question, Isaac and The Man climb in, while The Man, Corey, and Alvin hesitate.

COREY

Is this a good idea?

ALVIN

Yeah, I'm not feeling great about this.

MAN #2

All of that times three.

PAUL

No one has to come if they're uncomfortable.

MAN #2

Fantastic.

PAUL

Except you.

MAN #2

(joining them)

Damn.

MARY

How about you ladies?

ISAAC

I'm embarrassed for you guys right now.

COREY

Fine, I'm coming.

THE MAN

That leaves you, friend. Come on!

MARY

If you don't come I'll have to assign you to the next group tomorrow.

ALVIN

I'll take you up on that. I'm staying right here.

PAUL

Suit yourself.

Alvin, confused but relieved, steps back a few paces and takes a seat on a weathered plastic storage tub sitting nearby.

EXT. BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Paul and Mary push the boat away from the shore and paddle out into the water filled city. The water level is about the height of a standard two story home.

They pass a decrepit rooftop peeking above the water. On it is a red "X" like those seen on the doorways outside of the community.

PAUL

Okay, let's set up here.

MARY

We don't know what exactly is down there. Grab anything that could be useful.

The divers secure their masks, and scoot the oxygen tanks onto their backs. All of them but Corey slip into the water, bobbing there waiting for him.

Corey takes a few deep, rapid breaths, like he's about to pull a tooth. He climbs clumsily to land in the water with the others.

PAUL

You each have oxygen for about 30 minutes. Bring up as much as you can, and pass it up to us. But pay attention to your oxygen.

EXT. WATER - CONTINUOUS

The Man looks down at the oxygen gauge attached to his wrist. The ticker rests around the 30 minute mark.

MARY

Wait!

Mary grabs four waterproof flashlights and hands them to each diver.

All four flick their flashlights on and submerge. Four intense beams of light illuminate the eerie underwater scene.

Most of the house and its contents have been either ripped away by the initial hurricane, or disintegrated slowly over time.

Through the gaps in the walls and ceiling, the heavier objects remaining can be seen -- a couch, missing chunks of cushion and covered with algae, a refrigerator lying open on its back, fish bopping in and out.

The Man dives towards the right side of the house, the others exploring elsewhere. The Man approaches a gaping hole leading into the darkness.

A heavy steel door has been swung and left open. It is clear it has been some time since it was opened as it is now covered in algae and debris.

The Man uses his light to gesture to the others that he has found something and to follow him inside.

Once the others catch up, The Man continues inside the mysterious entrance.

INT. BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

Once inside, his flashlight reveals a concrete room about the size of a standard living room.

There are sets of bolted down metal shelving against all walls and in aisles across the middle. On the shelves are many plastic storage tubs.

The Man swims over and pulls one tub off of the shelf, letting it CLUNK to the ground, clouding the water with dirt.

He gestures to Man #2 to hold his flashlight, and pries open the tub, revealing its contents to be canned food.

Oxygen gauge - 20 minutes remaining.

The Man hug-grabs one of the tubs and begins to start back up to the surface. As he pops above water, Paul and Mary reach down to pull the tub up onto the boat.

The Man, once again, submerges and heads back towards the bunker. As he is swimming down, Isaac and Corey pass him on their way up, each with a tub in their arms.

Oxygen gauge - 15 minutes.

Once again he grabs a tub, and repeats the process, this time, Isaac and Man #2 pass him on their way back down.

The third time that The Man returns to the bunker, Isaac, Man #2 and himself leave at the same time, Corey lingering behind.

Corey shines his flashlight across the shelves, searching for something great to bring back with him. Possibly he is trying to make up for being a coward.

He sees something on the ground underneath one of the lowest shelves. He brings his face closer and shines the light on the object, reaching out the clear the front of debris and algae. This reveals that the object is a metal case with the FIRST AID symbol on it.

EXT. BOAT - CONTINUOUS

The Man, Man #2 and Isaac surface, passing up their tubs to Paul and Mary.

MAN #2
Where's the other guy?

Isaac and Man #2 hoist themselves back onto the boat.

ISAAC
Not here, so doesn't matter.

THE MAN
I swear he was right behind us.

Oxygen gauge -- 8 minutes.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
I'll go check. Be back in 5.

The Man submerges once more before Wes or the others could protest further.

INT. BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

The Man discovers Corey trapped under fallen shelving. The Man quickly swims to him, The Man shining his light through the fallen shelves to discover that Corey is unconscious.

The Man lifts the shelving, and, with the relief of weight the water offers, is able to flip it to rest on the ground next to the Corey.

Now, he sees the first aid case resting next to the Educated Man. The Man grabs the handle of the case in one hand, holding his flashlight in the same hand, and grab's Corey across the chest with his other arm, swimming up to the exit.

EXT. BOAT - CONTINUOUS

The Man rises to the surface, and the others hurriedly assist him in hoisting Corey and the First Aid case onto the boat.

The Man removes his mask, gasping for air, and hoists himself onto the boat.

Mary performs CPR on Corey, until he spits the water out of his lungs and is able to breathe again.

It is quiet while the group digests the drama.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - THAT EVENING

In a large auditorium-like room, tables have been arranged in rows across the room with the newcomers sitting along one side and a community member on the other.

In the fashion of speed-dating, the community members shift seats after a brief period of time.

For The Man, it is LINDA (29) he meets first. A librarian-like presence, she makes sure to not take up too much space as she sits.

Linda avoids eye contact.

THE MAN
Hello.

LINDA

Hi.

THE MAN

(a forced laugh)

You know, I don't know what they expect us to talk about.

Linda smiles, tersely.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

It's either what are your philosophies on life or how you do or don't like milking cows.

At this rate, he's talking to himself.

It's quiet, The Man shifts in his seat.

LINDA

(softly)

I do.

THE MAN

Sorry?

LINDA

I enjoy milking the cows. They're wonderful creatures.

THE MAN

Oh, well that's-

Ding!

Without a nod "goodbye" Linda rises from her seat, moving to the next one.

The next person to sit is Charlie, one of the people he had seen in the house.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Hell-

CHARLIE

You should know, I am only here because my friends wanted me to come with them. I do not support this at all.

The Man, though taken aback, does not become offended. He nods in understanding.

THE MAN

Must be some pretty great friends
you have.

CHARLIE

Didn't you hear me? I said I don't
think you people should even be
here.

THE MAN

As is your right. So, as I said, it
seems to me the fact that you're
here in spite of that opinion
suggests you have really special
friends.

Charlie finds The Man's kindness off-putting.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

You should tell me about them.

CHARLIE

Why would I?

Ding! The next shift occurs.

This time, GABE (24) sits down.

GABE

Hey there! I'm Gabe

THE MAN

Nice to meet you, Gabe. How are
you?

GABE

I'm great, it's so nice to have all
these new people around. Really
brings life to the place.

THE MAN

You might be alone in that aspect
my friend.

GABE

Oh I know, you'd-a thought that the
whole "oh no, scary ex-cons in the
suburbs!" Should have died
alongside suburbs themselves, ya
know?

THE MAN
(chuckling)
Yeah, you're probably right. Except
we are criminals still.

GABE
Sure, on paper, but the way I see
it you all are trying to live the
best life you can, just like us.

THE MAN
You're a really special person, you
know that?

Gabe blushes.

GABE
Oh, my. Well I-

Gabe continues talking, but The Man's attention turns to
Woman #1, sitting a few rows away. She laughs with the person
she's seated with.

GABE (CONT'D)
. . .Anyways, It's not that
important. . .

THE MAN
What isn't?

Ding!

THE MAN (CONT'D)
Hey, let's catch up next time and
you can tell me what is important.

GABE
(grinning)
Okay!

Next, Nala, one of Charlie's friends The Man had seen in the
house before, sits down.

NALA
(playful)
I have to apologize.

THE MAN
Why is that?

NALA
I'm not near as charming as Gabe.

THE MAN

Ah, indeed he is a tough act to follow.

NALA

Exactly, I am certain you'll be disappointed.

THE MAN

Certain enough to bet on it?

NALA

Yeah, I'd say so. I'm terribly boring.

THE MAN

Alright, what if you turned out to be less boring? Would you promise to see me at the next event?

NALA

That is probably the least interesting bet I've heard, if you could even call it that.

Both laugh.

THE MAN

You're right, but do you promise anyways?

NALA

Yeah, why not.

Ding!

Nala stands.

NALA (CONT'D)

Wait, how do I know if you think I'm "less boring" or not?

The Man grins.

NALA (CONT'D)

Oh, oh I see!

Nala moves along to the next person waiting.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

The Man, sits on his bed reading, the door to the hallway open. He sees Woman #1 walking dazedly to her room, pressing a flower to her nose.

She is smiling -- a rarity. She stops, and turns into his doorway.

WOMAN #1
(relaxed)
Is that my book?

THE MAN
They didn't put any good ones in my room.

WOMAN #1
Oh, that's fine, I was just wondering.

She turns back towards her room.

THE MAN
Are you ill?

WOMAN #1
Mmmm . . .not at all. But you know what?

THE MAN
What?

WOMAN #1
I'm okay that you stole my book.

THE MAN
I didn't-

WOMAN #1
I'm just saying, you've been nice to me. So thanks.

THE MAN
So, we're friends now?

WOMAN #1
(returning to normal)
What? No.

THE MAN
Because it almost seemed like we were friends there-

WOMAN #1

Whatever.

She enters her room and closes the door.

INT. TUNNEL - THE NEXT DAY

The Communities have built tunnels connecting each community to the other, allowing for safer transport of large groups.

The newcomers and community members, in groups separated by community organizers, walk through one of these tunnels away from their own community and towards another one.

The Man, Man #2, Man #3, and Man #4 walk together.

EXT. AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY - LATE MORNING

The group emerges from a tunnel into a bubble somewhat resembling their own, but rather than covering a group of houses, it is covering flat, flourishing land and a solitary barn.

The farm is an uneasy rendition of a "Garden of Eden", hosting a small orchard of fruit and nut trees, berry bushes, root vegetables, cabbages and squashes, as well as a small number of farm animals like those seen in the community.

A few OLDER INDIVIDUALS wave at them from the barn. They're the caretakers here, but members from the other communities are responsible for the bulk of the labor necessary to maintain the farm.

(dialog?)

Through the bubble, you can see that the ground outside is devoid of life. Inside, however, with the same artificial atmosphere of their community, this community hosts gardens and small fields of fruits, vegetables, and legumes.

Their purpose here is both to tend to the agriculture, and to socialize.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

Alright, newcomers, pair with
someone you met last night and
they'll show you the ropes.

The Man scans the crowd, and sees Gabe looking towards him, expectantly. He smiles, then shifts his gaze to Nala who is chatting with NEWCOMER 1. Gabe's face drops and he scans the crowd.

The Man approaches her anyways, Nala and the newcomer are mid-conversation.

THE MAN

Seems like you're trying to break your promise.

NALA

That would only be the case had you proven whether or not I was boring.

THE MAN

Me coming over to talk to you right now, knowing you may already have a partner is proof.

NEWCOMER 1

Yeah, speaking of which. . .

NALA

So seeing that someone else wants to talk to me is the real proof, huh?

THE MAN

Definitely not, for all I know, this guy could be a terrible judge of character.

NEWCOMER 1

Hey!

NALA

(to Newcomer 1)

I'm sorry, do you mind if I partner with him instead?

NEWCOMER 1

I guess not!

Irritated, Newcomer 1 walks away. Meanwhile, other people have paired off and begun tending to the crops.

Nala guides The Man over to a table with a chalkboard stating - "ERASE WHEN CLAIMED" with a list of tasks inscribed underneath.

INSERT - CHALKBOARD

ENCORPORATE MANURE INTO SOIL, PULL WEEDS AROUND THE ORANGE TREES, EXTERMINATE TOMATO HORNWORMS FROM TOMATO PLANTS.

BACK TO SCENE

Clearly, these are the last of the tasks available.

Nala picks up the piece of cloth to erase the "tomato hornworm" task.

THE MAN

You're more demented than I thought.

NALA

What?

THE MAN

You're okay with the senseless murder of unsuspecting tomato slugs?

NALA

Perhaps--they are a pest to tomato plants, you know.

The Man nods, but still does not buy it.

The Man and Nala walk up a dirt path splitting rows of low bushes bearing ripening berries.

The Man glimpses Woman #1 with the same person she had been with the night before, tending to some crops.

He brings his attention back to Nala.

THE MAN

I almost forgot -- you're welcome.

Nala looks to her left and right.

NALA

Did someone say thank you? Must be my shoddy hearing.

The Man laughs and Nala grins. They enter an impressive grove of tomato vines growing upwards on six-foot-tall wooden trellises.

THE MAN

Am I wrong to assume that guy had the social complexity of a
(grabbing overripe tomato
off vine)
wrinkled tomato?

NALA

Yes! He was very nice.

THE MAN

(mocking)

He was very nice. Okay, what are we doing? Grabbing slugs and squishing them between our fingers?

A tomato hornworm inches across a tomato vine at their eye level.

NALA

No! Look.

Nala pulls a small amateur-looking wooden box, with thumbnail-sized holes on the lid and some moist tomato vine clippings nestled in the dirt inside, out of her bag.

Nala reaches out for the tomato hornworm The Man had been referring to and lifts it gently with her pointer finger and thumb, tenderly placing it into the box.

The Man watches, admiring her.

NALA (CONT'D)

I have a place for them at home.
I'll show you later.

THE MAN

You'll have to, just so I can be sure you don't cook them up with salt and vinegar.

He is joking, but he sounds uncomfortably serious.

NALA

(laughing)

You're horrible! Are you going to help me or what?

THE MAN

I would love to help you.

Nala smiles, her next statement is a deflection.

NALA

The elders hate to find any left after we leave. They love their tomato soup.

Rhythmically, The Man and Nala hunt for the tomato hornworms. Adding each one to the carrier, occasionally helping one another, or laughing when The Man fails to pick one up.

After a period of time, they have about six tomato hornworms in the carrier, wriggling around happily and helplessly.

EXT. NALA'S HOUSE - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Nala and The Man approach her house - the one The Man had been caught outside of a few days before. Other people can be seen walking in pairs down the street or returning to their homes after a long day of farm work.

As is such with most of the homes, Nala's front yard is fenced in, hosting several chickens and a chicken coup. One of the chickens seems particularly interested in Nala's return.

NALA
(to the chicken)
Hello there, oh, I know you're
hungry, but these are not for you.

It seems the chicken senses the worms Nala carries in the box in her hands.

NALA (CONT'D)
(to The Man)
Follow me.

The Man smiles at here, and Nala turns to walk away. He glances vacantly at the chicken, not showing the same nurture for it that Nala had. He then follows Nala as she walks past the house to the backyard.

There, she approaches a makeshift tomato hornworm sanctuary - a comparatively unimpressive structure to that of the farm - containing a few small tomato plants growing on a three-foot-tall trellis. A few tomato hornworms wriggle around inside.

NALA (CONT'D)
I hated seeing them killed. I
figured, it makes no difference if
they're dead or relocated as long
as they're not there munching on
the tomato plants.

Nala opens the chicken-wire door and begins placing the tomato hornworms inside their new home.

THE MAN
Where did you get these ones?

NALA

I've always had a bit of a green thumb. I know how to propagate plants.

Nala places the last tomato hornworm and closes the door.

THE MAN

Shouldn't there be more in there? It seems you've been doing this for a while.

NALA

Well, not all of them survive. I know that is inevitable, but I like giving them a chance.

There is an awkward silence.

NALA (CONT'D)

So...

THE MAN

Ah, this is when I'm supposed to leave.

NALA

It does seem like that.

THE MAN

I don't know, I thought I might stay. It's nice here.

He is not entirely joking, but Nala chuckles lightly anyways, and walks up to the back door of the house and opens it, pausing in the in-between space.

NALA

I'm glad--that you like it here.

THE MAN

So I'm really leaving then?

NALA

(still smiling)

See you soon.

Nala enters the house and shuts the door behind her, leaving The Man standing alone in the yard.

He looks up to the bubble ceiling, and observes what appears to be storm clouds and lighting growing in the sky above it.

The Man walks back up the side of the house from where they came to see Community Organizers patrolling the streets for stragglers from the day's outing, some newcomers directly in tow.

One of them sees The Man walking out to the street from Nala's house.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 2
Come on now, we're to escort you
back to your homes.

The Man joins the few newcomers trailing behind Community Organizer 2 as they continue up the street.

The Man looks back to Nala's house. Confused, he sees someone watching him from inside the house, peeking through some curtains in the window.

Though he may or may not realize it, the person watching him is Charlie.

INT. KITCHEN - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

The Man arrives home and walks into the kitchen where he finds Man #4 eating a snack.

MAN #4
What a day man. I got stuck with
mixing cow-shit into dirt. I can
still smell it, too! I smell like
shit, you smell like shit. Even
this sandwich smells like shit.

Man #4 sets his sandwich down on a plate, eating is a futile effort.

MAN #4 (CONT'D)
What about you?

THE MAN
Me? Oh, I had to kill those spike-y
worms that feed on tomato plants.

MAN #4
Nice, now that sounds like fun.

The Man notices movement in the backyard through the kitchen window.

THE MAN
Yeah, sure. . .who's that outside?

Man #4 turns his head as if to look, before realizing he already knows the answer.

MAN #4

Oh, that's the she-demon. Seems like she's decided to become our local FernGully. Inspired by something, or *someone*, from earlier today apparently.

The Man does not respond, and instead goes to walk out to the backyard.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Woman #1 digs into the ground with a shovel. She's floundering around, but is determined to accomplish whatever it is that she's set out to do. Small mounds forming rows have already begun to take shape--the early beginnings of a small garden.

THE MAN

This looks. . .interesting.

Woman #1 stops, and glances at him sharply. She lifts the shovel once more and drive it into the earth.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Really, I'm not trying to be funny. I just can't tell what it is yet.

WOMAN #1

Great, that's reassuring.

Woman #1, taking a break, drops the shovel to the ground, and goes to drink some water.

THE MAN

Why don't you tell me?

WOMAN #1

(panting)

Tell you what?

THE MAN

What it is? It's my house too.

Woman #1 rolls her eyes.

WOMAN #1

It's a garden, okay? Not that it's any of your business, but I had a great time today.

(MORE)

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)

My partner even gave me some
unneded seeds to plant here.
That's what I'm doing, or at least
what I'm trying to do. Okay? Is
that good enough? Can you leave me
alone now?

The Man pauses.

Woman #1 pretends to be busy with her garden project.

THE MAN

You seem to like that guy, huh?

WOMAN #1

What guy?

THE MAN

You know, seed guy.

WOMAN #1

What? Have you been watching me or
something becau--

He interrupts, responding calmly and confidently.

THE MAN

Yes, I often do.

Woman #1, caught off guard, looks at him blankly. A moment
passes, and she snaps out of it, chuckling to herself
factiously--all the while fiddling with her gardening.

WOMAN #1

Oh man, you really know how to tell
a great joke, don't you?

THE MAN

No, I'm telling the truth.

Somehow, Woman #1 is yet again caught off guard.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

I guess I'd say I observe you. I
enjoy it.

WOMAN #1

Um, wow, okay. I don't really even
know what to say.

THE MAN

I wouldn't expect you to. But you
asked, so I told you.

Woman #1 stares into the freshly turned soil below her, as she pushes seeds into the mound she's created, placing one every few inches and pressing it down with the fleshy part of her thumb.

WOMAN #1

Okay, okay. . .why me?

The Man shrugs.

THE MAN

You fascinate me.

Woman #1 turns an unplanted seed nervously in her hand, still looking down. She raises her head to respond, when, suddenly, the low VROOM and SQUEAK of a large vehicle coming to a stop interrupts them.

EXT. FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

The Man and Woman #1 rush out to the front yard where Man #2,3, and 4 are already standing. There, a large self-driving transport vehicle idles on the street in front of them. Several people are already on board.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 3

A wildfire is encroaching on a nearby community, it's all hands on deck. Hop on!

The Man and Woman #1 exchange a glance.

The whole group wastes no time boarding the vehicle from the back.

Woman #1 is the second to last--The Man being the last--to board. As she places her foot and hands to hoist herself up, The Man unexpectedly reaches out, grabbing and lifting her under the arm to help her board.

EXT. COMMUNITY #2 - NIGHT

The vehicle -- another one following behind -- speeds through the dark. The headlights shining on the desolate road ahead do little to reveal the scene, as the dense dust in the air clouds the space between the beams.

The dying remnants of a storm -- the low, tired rumbles of thunder, and the dull flicker of lightning -- hover above them in the night sky. In the direction they are headed, a small red-orange light flickers on the horizon.

INT. VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

The Man sits between Man #2 and 3, across from Man #4 and Woman #1. Between them at their feet are buckets of water, shaking as splashing as the vehicle lumbers up the road.

EXT. COMMUNITY #2 - CONTINUOUS

As they come closer, the light grows. They see a community similar to their own nestled in the center of an abandoned housing development.

One of the houses on the exterior of the community bubble roars in flames. A few people from the endangered community gather at the base.

As the vehicles from our community pull up, a gust of wind helps one of the flames from the fire to jump to the house next to it, further approaching the bubble's edge.

The vehicles' occupants join the scene, and the ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1 addresses the group.

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

(shouting)

We tried to keep the houses wet in preparation for the lighting storm tonight. This one must have been missed because it lit up as soon as it was struck.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 3

Okay, where do you need us?

Meanwhile, a few of the endangered community members have propped a ladder up against the recently ignited house and are attempting to extinguish it by having buckets of water passed up to them.

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

I need as many of you as possible dumping water on this thing. We can't let it get any closer.

Newcomers from our community, with assistance from a few community members, form a line from each vehicle to the burning houses. One at a time, they unload a bucket of water and pass it along. Someone has climbed to the second story of an untouched house next to the fire and is chucking the water across the flames from above.

Others working on the recently affected house are struggling to contain the flames, each one dampened by the water finds a way to reach back up again.

The Man, going unnoticed, observes the struggle. He watches as even the best attempts are not stopping the fire. He approaches Endangered Community Organizer 1, who is presently shouting directions to a group exiting their community.

THE MAN

I might have an idea.

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

If you hadn't noticed, I'm managing a crisis here, excuse me.

Endangered Community Organizer 1 tries to walk away, but The Man follows him.

THE MAN

No offense, but it does not seem like this is going to work.

Endangered Community Organizer 1 stops, throws their hands up in the air.

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

Thank you, really. Even if you're right, we still have to try.

THE MAN

Right, I'm just saying try smarter, not harder.

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

What's your big idea then?

THE MAN

I was wondering, do you guys have the same rain drones we have at our community?

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1

Yes, but they don't carry nearly enough water to put out a fire like this.

THE MAN

Sure, but why not bring them out here anyway? It might help subdue the fire enough for us to put it out.

Endangered Community Organizer 1 nods his head, seeing the plausibility of the idea.

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1
Alright, let's try it.
(gesturing to a few people
nearby)
You, and you--grab some people and
get the all the working drones out
here. Fill their tanks to max
capacity. We're going to try
something.

THE MAN
What should I do?

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1
Help get as much water on that fire
as you can.

The Man nods, and joins the others in tossing buckets of water onto the fire.

EXT. COMMUNITY #2 - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

A group emerges from the Endangered Community, carrying several droids like those The Man had seen the first night in the other community. They set the drones flat on the ground, and back away. One of the people from the group jobs over to Endangered Community Organizer 1 and hands them the remote for the drones.

The drones take flight, circling the houses on fire, releasing rain-like droplets of water over the flames.

As he tosses a bucket of water onto the flames, The Man pauses and looks up to see his plan in action.

Like he anticipated, the water from the drones does not fully extinguish the flames, but instead, reduces them to become manageable enough for the people on the ground.

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1
Okay, this is our chance people!

Freshly filled buckets of water are carried out from the endangered community, and there is an all out last effort to douse the flames in their entirety.

Sweat drips across the hot, dust-caked faces of those closest to the fire, including The Man.

With every toss of a bucket of water, the flames recede further and further to the ground. A faint HISS sounds as the last few flames dampen down.

Light fades from the scene, leaving only the faint orange glow from the community bubble, and the bright white of the vehicles' headlights.

A moment of silence. The strained breathing of the crowd is the only sound. Then:

ENDANGERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 1 (CONT'D)

(to The Man)

I've gotta say, that was a pretty good save.

(louder, to the crowd)

Everybody. This guy helped save our home tonight!

The crowd sporadically WHOOPS and CLAPS.

The Man's face beams with adrenaline. Woman #1 watches him, conservatively, clapping slowly along with the crowd.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - THE NEXT DAY

The Man, Man #2,3, and 4-- and Woman #1 trailing slightly behind-- are guided by a Community Organizer towards a mixed group of community members and newcomers gathered in front of the community center.

Paul and Mary are addressing the latter group, but stop as The Man's group approaches.

PAUL

Didn't you hear? Your group gets the day off today.

MAN #2

Ah, yes! Finally.

MAN #3

Why?

MARY

It seems only fair as our neighbor community would've likely suffered if it were not for you.

She is referring to The Man.

PAUL

Take the day. We'll see you guys
back here tomorrow.

INT. HOME - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

The group sits from one another in their living room. Woman #1 sits the furthest away at the kitchen island.

The Man writes privately in a small moleskin notebook.

It is silent, and seems like no one has spoken for some time. The sit uncomfortably, as if having recently had a large meal.

MAN #4

. . .So, we're not allowed to go
anywhere, we're not allowed to help
out. What are we supposed to do?

MAN #2

(eating beans out of a
can)

Quit complaining. I'm happy to sit
and do absolutely nothing, not a
thing. We've been all over the
place, given no time for ourselves.
We deserve this, ya know?

Some beans spill on to his shirt. Woman #1 watches him pitifully.

MAN #4

You disgust me.

MAN #2

At least I'm trying to enjoy
myself, and not whining about
having downtime like you.

Suddenly, Man #3 jumps up, comically so, from his position on the couch.

MAN #3

Oh! I've got it!

He rushes upstairs.

THE MAN

And that's the most excitement
we're going to have all day.

Woman #1 slips up, and lets out a brief laugh. The Man, Man #2, and Man #4 turn their heads towards her in surprise at her reaction.

Without thought, she re-adjusts into her familiar moody demeanor, pretending as if nothing happened.

Man #3 comes rushing back downstairs and into the living room, holding a dusty, discolored box with red lettering reading:

INSERT - BOX

MONOPOLY

BACK TO SCENE

MAN #3
I forgot that I had found this in
my room.

WOMAN #1
What is it?

The others are shocked, Man #2 gasps -- in an intentionally dramatic way.

THE MAN
Are you joking?

WOMAN #1
(snapping at him)
No.

MAN #2
You never played Monopoly?

MAN #4
I hate boardgames but even I know
what it is.

WOMAN #1
I've been in prison since I was 8-
years-old. So, no, I've never
played.

An awkward silence. Man #3 stands still, deflating in his excitement. He wonders if it was a bad idea.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)
So, how do we do it?

INT. LIVING ROOM - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

They are all gathered around a table where a Monopoly board has already been set up. The pieces, board, and cards all look well used and have seen better days.

They've been playing for a little while, all three men explain the rules to Woman #1 as they go along.

Woman #1 rolls, and moves her piece to pass GO.

MAN #3

Okay, so now you get two-hundred dollars.

Man #3 digs into the dull fake money to dole out Woman #1's dues.

WOMAN #1

Why? I didn't do anything.

MAN #2

You passed "GO".

WOMAN #1

What's the point?

MAN #4

It's just the rules.

WOMAN #1

Yeah, but how do you even try to pass "GO."

MAN #3

You don't, its just chance.

Man #3 hands her the Monopoly money. Woman #1 accepts it, cautiously.

WOMAN #1

Hmm, okay. . .

THE MAN

Look, now you have enough to buy a house for your property.

The Man takes a house, and places it on one of her properties.

WOMAN #1

Really?

MAN #3
Now you owe me fifty dollars.

Woman #1 hands over the fake bill.

WOMAN #1
Interesting.

MONTAGE

-Woman #1, The Man, Man #2, 3, and 4 taking turns rolling the dice

-Woman #1 placing many houses and hotels on her properties

-Woman #1 smiling, laughing--clearly winning

-Man #2 appearing disappointed

-They move on to playing charades, and hide-and-seek--all the while appearing to have a wondrous time

BACK TO SCENE

Hours have passed and it is now darkened outside. Man #2 snoozes on the couch, Man #3 and #4 yawn as they shuffle out of the living room, leaving The Man and Woman #1 alone.

THE MAN
I can't believe you slaughtered us
at every game.

Woman #1 grins proudly.

WOMAN #1
Yeah, me either.
(excitedly)
But it felt great.

THE MAN
Isn't that the point? To feel good?

Though The Man is quite calm, Woman #1's excitement fluctuates to discomfort.

WOMAN #1
I guess--come on I want to show you something.

Woman #1 jumps up and heads upstairs. The Man pauses in his seat before following.

INT. WOMAN #1'S ROOM - NIGHT

As The Man enters her room, Woman #1 is kneeling down, pulling a rectangular object wrapped in cloth out from underneath her bed.

Sitting cross-legged on the ground, Woman #1 unfolds the cloth to reveal a canvas painting depicting a flurry of different varieties of flowers--lilies, carnations, daisies, sunflowers, and hydrangeas--all nestled together.

She hands the painting to The Man.

WOMAN #1
I haven't actually seen flowers
like that since I was seven-years-
old.

THE MAN
This is all from memory then?

Woman #1 nods.

The Man, still holding the painting, stares at it in awe.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
It's incredible. Where'd you learn
to paint like this?

WOMAN #1
For a little while they taught an
arts and crafts class, before the
prisons shut down.

THE MAN
Its been that long since you've
painted?

WOMAN #1
Yep. This is the first time I've
gotten my hands on supplies.

The Man's daze dissolves slightly.

THE MAN
Where did you get the supplies?

Woman #1 looks to the floor.

WOMAN #1
I found them.

THE MAN
Where?

WOMAN #1
In one of the houses.

THE MAN
So they could have belonged to
someone else?

Woman #1 shrugs her shoulders, keeping her gaze downwards.

WOMAN #1
I can't help it. I never learned
how to get what I wanted the
(air quoting)
"Right" way.

THE MAN
You shouldn't have to take
anything, but you shouldn't have to
ask for anything either.

Woman #1 looks up at him, confused.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
Things should just be given to you.

WOMAN #1
I don't understand.

The Man moves closer to her, sitting on the edge of the bed.

THE MAN
What don't you understand?

WOMAN #1
You say you find me so fascinating,
yet you know nothing about me.

THE MAN
I know that you don't trust people,
that's why you're not friendly to
anyone. That way you never have to
worry about being disappointed.

Looking at The Man now, Woman #1's face begins to soften.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
I know you enjoy reading and
creating gardens, and now I know
you can paint your memories. You
can be all of that in a place we
don't entirely belong in. That is
fascinating.

They move closer to one another -- Woman #1 shifting to rise from the floor, The Man leaning down. As the space closes in, *The Princess Bride* style, this moment lacks the tenderness and care of Buttercup and Westley, suggesting instead uneasy tension and power-imbalance.

EXT. HAZARD ZONE NORTHEAST - THE NEXT DAY

CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH

The labor group -- led by Paul and Mary -- work their way through an abandoned neighborhood in the Northeastern Hazard Zone.

Like an overnight freeze affects grass, frost has developed over the whole of the landscape and has been like such for some time. All houses are covered in a light grey and white layer of ice and frost. It is mostly cold - very cold and still.

Trees, if standing, no longer have their leaves. The sky, as well as any accompanying plant life is desaturated in color and dead in appearance.

The group walks through the neighborhood, some house's doors already have the familiar red "X" spray painted on them, indicating they have already been cleared of any usable resources.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Man's group -- Man #2,3, and 4, and Woman #1 -- enter a house and scavenge it for resources. They begin by setting an empty storage box near the door, then disperse, one person to a room, barely speaking.

INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Man heads upstairs into a bedroom that appears to have belonged to a young child -- a boy. There are toys and trinkets, pictures of the boy and his parents on top of his dresser and desk. Every remnant indicates this boy had a happy life.

The Man examines these items, lingering notably at a picture of the boy riding a bike -- perhaps for the first time. It is evident The Man never lived a life similar to that of this boy.

Man #3 walks by and sees The Man standing in the room. He steps in to check on him.

MAN #3
Hey man, you good?

No response, The Man doesn't even move.

Man #3, slightly concerned, approaches The Man, and, once again:

MAN #3 (CONT'D)
You alright?

Man #3 gently places his hand on The Man's shoulder. The Man winces, turning to look at Man #3, his face taking on an expression of confusion unlike that of his normal self.

Almost within the same instant, his brief trance breaking, his face returns to normal.

THE MAN
Sorry, just feeling a little out of it today.

Man #3 laughs uncomfortably.

MAN #3
You scared me there for a minute.

The Man, trying to make a joke, raises his hands and utters a sarcastic:

THE MAN
Boo!

Man #3, still slightly disturbs, chuckles forcibly, but follows The Man out of the room cautiously.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Man #2 and #4 drag the now filled box out of the house, The and Man #3 exiting after them.

EXT. HAZARD ZONE NORTHEAST - CONTINUOUS

Woman #1 closes the door and takes a can of red spray paint and makes a large "X" on the door.

Leaving the box at the front of the lawn closest to the street to be picked up later by the truck, the men walk up the street to the next yet-to-be-searched house, skipping one or two that already have red "X"s.

Woman #1 lags further behind the group than is usual, especially considering how friendly she had been with the group the day before.

MAN #2

(gesturing to Woman #1)

Guess someone's back to their usual shtick.

MAN #3

I don't know, she seems pretty quiet. Even for her.

MAN #4

She's probably just had enough of you guys.

MAN #3

Maybe we should ask if she's okay.

The Man certainly does not want Man #3 to talk to Woman #1.

THE MAN

To be honest, last night she told me some pretty disturbing things about herself. I think we should just leave her alone.

MAN #3

What did she tell you?

MAN #2

More importantly, how disturbing are we talking?

THE MAN

I really shouldn't say, but all you need to know is that she isn't quite right in the head.

MAN #3

Are you sure?

The Man looks back towards Woman #1 whose eyes keep to her feet.

THE MAN

I'm sure.

INT. THE MAN'S ROOM - THAT NIGHT

The Man, sitting at his desk, writes in his usual notebook. He hears a shuffling in the hallways, and an envelope is slipped under his closed door.

He takes a moment to finish his thought, closes his notebook, and pads over to the door to scoop up the unmarked envelope.

Inside, there is an invitation.

INSERT - INVITATION

Your presence is requested tomorrow at the Community Center.

An Organizer will arrive to escort you promptly at 9:00 a.m.

BACK TO SCENE

The Man, puzzled to receive such an invitation, heads to the Man #3's room to seek input.

INT. MAN #3'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Man #3 sits at the desk in his room, a book lying open next to him, papers crumpled around him, pencil in his hand.

THE MAN

Hey, did you get some sort of note
or invitation slipped under your
door today?

Man #3 does not look up from his desk where he struggles to conceive of what to write on his current piece of paper.

MAN #3

I don't know what you're talking
about.

THE MAN

Okay -- never-mind -- sorry.

The Man moves to leave. Man #3 still has not written anything, though he is firmly at the ready.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

What are you doing exactly?

Man #3 releases a sound like trapped air.

MAN #3

Writing a fake love letter.

THE MAN
And how's that going?

Man #3 simply waives his hand in dismissal.

The Man leaves, and heads back to his room.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Man passes by Woman #1's room as usual. Unlike usual, however, her door is wide open. She sits on the edge of her bed, occupied with no activity but to stare ahead vacantly.

The Man pokes his head in and raises the invitation in his hand.

THE MAN
Did you get anything like this?

Woman #1 turns her head to face him, almost robotically. Though her face is in his direction, her eyes pace between the invitation he holds and the empty space past it.

She moves her head side to side: "No".

The Man nods agreeably and replies efficiently and matter-of-factly.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
Alright.

He turns and enters his own room, closing the door behind him.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - THE NEXT DAY - 0900

Outside of the Community Center, Nala stands waiting next to a self-driving Saturn Series S 2002.

When she sees The Man approaching, escorted by an Organizer, she smiles and waves.

NALA
(to the Organizer)
I've got it from here.

The Organizer hesitates to depart. She smiles and nods, and they comply.

THE MAN
Is this when they let you kill me
and feed by body to your worms?

Nala, as expected, laughs thoughtlessly.

NALA

No, we're going on a little trip.
One on one.

She gestures for him to get into the car and she does the same.

INT. SELF-DRIVING CAR - CONTINUOUS

THE MAN

Why isn't anyone else in my house
leaving today?

NALA

Supposedly it's a little too early
to pairing off, but they made an
exception for me.

EXT. ENCHANTED HIGHWAY, ND - LATER

The sky is a murky grayish-yellow, and thick with dust as has come to be expected.

The self-driving car speeds down the forgotten and gloomy Enchanted Highway, kicking up the dust that has settled on the road.

The car passes the seven once proud metal structures depicting birds in flight, fish underwater, and happy farmers -- all standing at impossible heights.

The statues appear even more out of place than they had when they were initially erected 80-years-ago, as they now stand amidst a dying landscape, and are no longer the objects of humanity's leisure time. They crack and crumble to reflect their vulnerability to the new climate.

INT. SELF-DRIVING CAR - CONTINUOUS

The Man stares out the window at the structures as they pass.

Nala observes his interest in the statues.

NALA

It's sad, isn't it?

THE MAN

What is?

NALA

That they're stuck here, and no one
cares anymore.

THE MAN

Maybe. Maybe no one really cared
before anyways.

EXT. NORTH DAKOTA HERITAGE CENTER & STATE MUSEUM - LATER

The self-driving car approaches the long abandoned North
Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum.

A few left behind cars, a now permanent fixture, sit in the
parking lot.

INT. SELF-DRIVING CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car parks, and Nala smiles at The Man.

NALA

We're here.

THE MAN

And here is . . . ?

Nala is already exiting the car.

NALA

Does it really matter?

The Man laughs absurdly as Nala grabs a bag out of the trunk
of the car.

THE MAN

No, I guess it does not.

EXT. NORTH DAKOTA HERITAGE CENTER & STATE MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

The Man follows Nala, who is now heading towards the
abandoned museum.

Nala confidently approaches a broken window, first placing
the bag inside the opening, then carefully removing her coat
and placing it on the bottom of the window ledge to cover any
left over glass.

THE MAN

Break into strange buildings often?

NALA

Yes, actually. That's sort of a fact of life now, if you haven't noticed.

THE MAN

But something tells me this building doesn't have something we need inside?

Nala sits on her jacket to swing her legs to the inside of the building.

NALA

Maybe not something we can hold or eat, but still something we need.

Nala, now fully inside the building, looks out to The Man.

NALA (CONT'D)

So are you--

INT. NORTH DAKOTA HERITAGE CENTER & STATE MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

Before she can finish provoking The Man, he follows suit in climbing through the window into the museum.

NALA

Alright then.

The Man and Nala lock eyes as The Man straightens. Nala deflects by reaching into her bag to hand him a flashlight.

NALA (CONT'D)

You'll be needing this.

There is tension, but neither will acknowledge it yet, especially Nala.

INT. NORTH DAKOTA HERITAGE CENTER & STATE MUSEUM - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Their flashlight beams reveal dusty museum displays and interactive exhibits. Some parts of the roof have caved in, providing a dim grey light to aid their flashlights.

While some of the dinosaur and animal skeletons on display are still fully intact, one or two of them are partially disassembled -- a fallen leg or arm bone demonstrating how long these artifacts have been left uncared for.

Nala approaches the largest dinosaur, still fully intact, and stares into the sockets where its eyes would have been.

The Man passes an early version of the astronaut space suit on display inside of a glass case. He stops to admire it.

He catches up to Nala, who's still observing the dinosaur.

NALA

Seeing these things left here like this--makes me wonder if that's going to be us. Maybe not anytime soon, but someday--eventually.

The Man, standing beside her now, looks into the eyes of the skeleton.

THE MAN

It's quite possible. But the real question is, who would display us?

The Man grins.

Nala breaks her attention and turns to The Man, giving him a look that indicates that she is both amused and disgusted.

The Man shrugs.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Or, we carry on. And we'll never be interesting or rare enough to be caught dead, on display in a museum.

NALA

Or that. . .

Again, they meet each other's eyes, and this time, they kiss.

INT. NALA'S HOUSE - THAT EVENING

CHARLIE

(disappointed)

So, you've kissed him now?

Charlie and Nala sit at a table, drinking tea and recapping the outing Nala shared with The Man.

NALA

That is what I just said.

Nala's adrenaline-fueled cheer fades, and she shifts uncomfortable in her seat.

NALA (CONT'D)

Can't you just try and be okay with the fact that this is working out for me?

CHARLIE

No, I really can't. I don't like him, he seems off.

NALA

You know that because. . ? You barely talked to him.

CHARLIE

Exactly. I don't know him, and I don't like the idea of you being so quick to accept him at face value.

NALA

You know I love you, and I get that you're all, "keep everyone at a distance," but I've made my decision.

Charlie laughs, mockingly.

CHARLIE

Made what decision?

She asks this knowing that Nala is referring to her intent to claim The Man and support him as a fully fledged member of the Communities.

NALA

(keeping her eyes low)
You know.

CHARLIE

Jesus Christ.

NALA

I'm pretty sure Catholicism is dead.

CHARLIE

I know, but it still feels good to say.

NALA

Putting aside that you don't have a good feeling about him, and that
(mimicking)
"Jesus Christ, Nala is so blind to the flaws of others."

Charlie laughs, reluctantly.

NALA (CONT'D)
Will you please just talk to him
again? Either give me something
definitive to change my mind, or
drop it and let me be happy.

Charlie and Nala smile at each other. They've been friends a long time and have had many disagreements, but none as important as this one.

Charlie nods, slowly, thoughtfully.

CHARLIE
Okay, okay. Just for you.

Charlie points a finger gun at Nala, firing a "shot" as the word "you" leaves her mouth.

INT. NALA'S HOUSE, UPSTAIRS - LATER

Charlie walks through the upstairs hallway and knocks on the open door of one of the bedrooms.

Manu sketches pensively with charcoal at his desk.

CHARLIE
(annoyed)
So can I come in or?

MANU
(dryly)
The door is open, isn't it?

Charlie enters and climbs on his bed in a familiar manner.

Manu barely acknowledges her, continuing to develop his drawing.

Charlie lets out a sigh, likely intentionally.

MANU (CONT'D)
Let's hear it?

CHARLIE
If you insist.

MANU
I don't.

CHARLIE

I think Nala's making a huge mistake.

MANU

Maybe she is. That's not your responsibility.

CHARLIE

But what if it's a really big mistake?

MANU

So nothing. Still none of your business.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - THE NEXT DAY

MANU (O.S.)

Just let it lie.

Charlie observes The Man from across the room. Newcomers and community members are gathered in the community center. This time sharing a potluck dinner.

The Man sits with his housemates -- except Woman #1 who sits alone at a different table -- they eat and laugh, having an overall good time.

Charlie watches as The Man stands and goes to serve himself more food. This is her chance. She grabs her plate and hurriedly walks over to where The Man is refilling his plate.

She begins to fill her own plate, standing across from him at the serving table. He does not notice her presence.

Charlie makes a poor attempt at casual conversation.

CHARLIE

Hey.

The Man looks up at her, and she flashes a fake, toothy smile.

THE MAN

Hi.

(pausing to recollect)

It's Carly, right?

Charlie drops the fake smile.

CHARLIE

Charlie.

THE MAN
Oh, right--sorry.

The Man pays her very little attention, still methodically adding food from various dishes to his plate.

CHARLIE
Yeah, whatever. So. . . How are you adjusting?

Charlie is not sure what to talk about, so even this standard pleasantry is awkward.

THE MAN
It really isn't an adjustment at all. Feels more like I've come home.

CHARLIE
Yeah, that's great. And Nala? You two seem to be getting along.

THE MAN
Hm? Oh--yes, of course we are. I didn't know you knew each other.

CHARLIE
Funny, because I mentioned her the first time we met.

THE MAN
Really? You'd think I would remember that.

CHARLIE
You would think.

The Man smiles, distant. And begins to return to his table.

THE MAN
Nice chatting with you.

Charlie does not return The Man's smiley demeanor.

CHARLIE
You too.

Charlie watches him as he passes his table and joins Nala, igniting chatter and laughter as she introduces him to Manu and Ross.

It has occurred to her that now is a rare moment in which nearly everyone is gathered in one place, leaving the remainder of the community unoccupied.

She tosses her plate in the trash bin and hastily exits the room.

Woman #1, who had earlier observed Charlie's conversation with The Man, is the only one to notice Charlie's abrupt exit.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Charlie walks speedily up through the hallway of the Community Center. She seems to generally know where she is going, and she finds her way down to the basement level.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Though once simply a maintenance floor, this floor is now a hub for the Community Organizers. Charlie approaches a door with the word RECORDS inscribed at eye level.

Surprisingly only to Charlie--who usually gets what she wants-- the door is locked. She stops in her tracks, stumped.

Charlie whips around--as if to continue on to Plan B--and is abruptly startled by Woman #1, who has followed her down to the basement.

Woman #1 struggles to maintain eye contact with Charlie, fidgeting with her fingers and shifting in her stance.

Charlie's surprise fades as Woman #1 hesitates to speak. She returns to frustration.

CHARLIE

This is the moment when you explain
why you were following me.

Woman #1 surprises herself as she tries to speak.

WOMAN #1

I--

She clears her throat. Charlie's patience grows thin.

CHARLIE

Okay I'm not biting,
(reaching out to grab
Woman #1's arm)
What's your indication?

Woman #1 pulls her arm out of Charlie's grasp.

WOMAN #1
(voice raised)
. . .I noticed you. . .

She takes a breath.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)
(calmer)
. . .speaking to him.

CHARLIE
And?

WOMAN #1
And you didn't seem to buy his
bullshit. Then you took off.

CHARLIE
What's it to you?

WOMAN #1
He's in my house cluster. He--we--
something happened between us.

CHARLIE
Did he hurt you?

WOMAN #1
I--I can't talk about that, not
now.

Charlie, ignorantly so, is slightly annoyed. But tries to be
empathetic.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)
Look I don't even know what I'm
doing. I saw you leave, and I felt
myself standing and following you,
and here I am.

CHARLIE
Well you're here now so are you
going to help me or what?

WOMAN #1
I doubt I can get that door open
any better than you can.

CHARLIE
All I need is something on him--
anything. Do they still seem pretty
busy up there?

WOMAN #1
Yeah, why?

CHARLIE
Can you take me to your house?

INT. THE MAN'S HOUSE - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Woman #1 leads Charlie through the front door of the house.

WOMAN #1
(loudly)
Hello?

Charlie glares at Woman #1. Woman #1 shrugs.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)
Just checking.

Woman #1 gestures to Charlie to follow her upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

When they reach the upstairs hallway, Woman #1 lingers closer to her room, but point towards The Man's room.

WOMAN #1
That's his room.

Charlie goes to enter The Man's room, Woman #1 recedes further into her own room.

CHARLIE
Aren't you coming in?

Woman #1 shakes her head, "No." She grows pale.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Alright, keep an eye and an ear out
for me, will ya?

Woman #1 nods, "Yes."

INT. THE MAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie looks around The Man's room. It is abnormally tidy, almost mirroring what one would expect of a soldier who must keep their bunk in order.

After digesting the space, she dives into her work. Moving quickly and quietly, ruffling through drawers, looking under the bed, searching the closet. Nothing, not a thing stands out as suspicion.

Out of ideas, Charlie sits on the primly made bed. She shifts uncomfortable before standing to investigate what had been causing her discomfort.

Unrolling the twice-folded blanket covering the bed, she discovers a small moleskin notebook nuzzled between the crisp folds.

Charlie's excited, but she regains focus and stops before immediately opening it.

She pokes her head out of the room.

CHARLIE
(holding up the notebook)
Have you seen this before?

WOMAN #1
Yes, he writes in it all the time.
I think he said it was poetry.

CHARLIE
But you've never actually seen
anything he's written in it?

WOMAN #1
No. He says it's personal.

CHARLIE
Do you want to look through it with
me?

WOMAN #1
How about you read it alone first?
But be quick, we've been gone a
while.

CHARLIE
Okay--I'll just need a minute.

Charlie returns to the room.

INT. THE MAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie sits on the bed again, and opens the notebook. The first few pages are blank, and then writing appears. Long paragraphs in abnormally small print -- like a dense diary entry.

Charlie squints, trying to read the small print, but cannot discern words from one another.

She continues to turn the page one by one, then, growing impatient, she flips the pages like a fan, stopping abruptly when she notices several detailed black-ink drawings on the pages in the center of the notebook.

INSERT - FIRST DRAWING

A sketch-portrait of an unfamiliar looking woman, whose face has been battered, bruised, and beaten. This woman stares blankly off the page, and a word bubble hovers to the side of her face:

"I'm sorry, I'll do better next time."

BACK TO SCENE

Charlie's face contorts. She is disturbed, as if she had not pictured what she would find if she went looking for reasons to be wary of The Man.

She turns the page.

INSERT - SECOND DRAWING

This sketch portrays a character, who uncannily resembles Woman #1, lying on the ground, partially submerged under dirt.

On the parts of her body that are visible above ground -- her face, one of her hands, part of her shoulder -- tomato hornworms wriggle in and out of her skin. Though this suggests that she's dead, her eyes are wide open. The word bubble on this page reads:

"Composting."

BACK TO SCENE

Charlie's expression evolves from disturbance into sorrow. Hesitantly -- the excitement from earlier completely fading-- she turns the page again.

When she sees the next page, she snaps the notebook and her eyes shut. After taking a breath, she opens the notebook back to the same page.

INSERT - THIRD DRAWING

This sketch, perhaps the most upsetting of the three, depicts a beheaded chicken lying on the ground, blood pooling around it, a cartoonish-looking butcher's knife tossed to one side.

As if this were not enough, in the place of the chicken's decapitated head is a human one. The face of this head has features similar to Nala's, though it is not an exact rendering.

BACK TO SCENE

Charlie sits frozen, eyes wide, coming to understand that she is in over her head.

Woman #1's voice shakes Charlie out of her stupor.

WOMAN #1
(hissing)
Can you hear me or what?

Woman #1 stands in the doorway of The Man's room, as if appearing there instantaneously. She leans into the room, reaching out to Charlie and waving her hand to get her attention.

If it were not serious, she would certainly not be this far into the room.

CHARLIE
What?

Charlie closes the notebook, and stands.

WOMAN #1
They're back.

CHARLIE
Christ--

Charlie hurriedly refolds the blanket on the bed -- only once over, not twice like it had been before -- tucking the notebook under the fold of the blanket. She then attempts to hide any indication of her being there by swiping her hands over the blanket to smooth out the indents.

Both women hear the door open at the same time and make eye contact. Woman #1 gestures to Charlie to follow her into her room across the hall.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As Charlie follows Woman #1 into her room, she glimpses The Man, the other men in their cluster, and, like a gut punch, Nala.

Though Charlie wants to go downstairs and tell her, she resigns to enter Woman #1's room.

INT. WOMAN #1'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Muffled chatter and laughter drift upstairs.

WOMAN #1
You should stay here for a while.
If you try and leave now, they'll
see you.

Now Charlie is the one at a loss for words.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)
What did you find?

Charlie does not know if she should tell Woman #1 the whole truth, or any part of it for that matter.

CHARLIE
. . .Nothing.

Woman #1 furrows her brows, she recognizes that this is probably a lie, but she is not mad.

WOMAN #1
Hm, that's too bad.

Charlie nods.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)
Want some water or something? I can
scope it out.

CHARLIE
You don't have to do that.

WOMAN #1
I know.

Woman #1 exits the room, closing the door quietly behind her.

INT. WOMAN #1'S ROOM - THAT NIGHT

The sounds of merriment have died down, leaving the house in near silence.

Charlie and Woman #1 sit on the floor up against the wall. Neither of them speak.

Woman #1 stands up, opens the door cautiously, and gestures for Charlie to follow.

INT. THE MAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Woman #1 guides Charlie down the stairs to the front door. Charlie slips out, unnoticed. Woman #1 watches her leave before closing the door and returning upstairs.

INT. NALA'S HOUSE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Charlie walks through the front door of her home and immediately begins calling out:

CHARLIE

Nala!

Charlie dashes up the stairs, checking each room. Nothing. She hurries back downstairs, calling out again:

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Nala?!

Looking here and there, Charlie sees or hears no one. She enters the kitchen and jumps at the sight of Manu, standing calmly, drinking a cup of tea.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Jesus Manu--why didn't you respond to me?

MANU

You weren't calling my name.

CHARLIE

Ha, right, of course. Where is
(factiously)
"She-whose-name-I-call"?

MANU

Not here.

Charlie opens her mouth to form a catty rebuttal, but Manu cuts her off.

MANU (CONT'D)

She told me she might not come back tonight.

CHARLIE

What does that mean?

Manu gives Charlie a look of, "you know what my opinion is."

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I know, it's none of my business.
But I need to tell her something.

MANU

So, you'll tell her as soon as she gets back.

CHARLIE

Truly, thank you for your help.

Charlie storms off, heading back upstairs.

INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM

Charlie enters her own room, climbs on the bed and lies on her back. Eventually she drifts off to sleep.

INT. NON-DESCRIPT LOCATION (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Nala's smiling face appears, quickly morphing into disturbing, abstract versions of itself. Changing rapidly, sometimes in dark blues, purples, and greens, and other times bright yellow, blue, and red. The image flickers through infinite variations, crescendoing into an unrecognizable figure.

INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Charlie wakes up sweating. Realizing it is morning, she jumps out of bed, and searches the house chaotically like she had the night before.

CHARLIE

(repeating)

Nala!

She opens Manu's bedroom door, shocking him awake, and quickly moving on, determined to talk to Nala.

After searching most of the house, Charlie goes to the front door and yanks it open, fully expecting to step outside and see Nala feeding the chickens.

EXT. NALA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

When Charlie opens the door, she screams, her legs giving out from underneath her, bringing her to sit against the open door.

Fortunately, she does see Nala, but instead of her feeding the chickens, she sits off to the side of the doorway, weeping quietly.

At the foot of the door lies a decapitated chicken much like the one depicted in The Man's notebook. The Man difference is that this head, in fact, belongs to the chicken, and no butcher's knife was left behind.

NALA
(crying, mumbling)
Who would do this?

As if this moment were not unpleasant enough as is, The Man escorted by an Organizer walks up the street and turns up the walkway of the house, the Organizer waiting at the sidewalk. The Man carries a wrapped gift.

Charlie, still in shock, does not react to The Man's arrival. She does, however, manage to bring her eyes up from the body of the chicken to see The Man's face transform from "friendly morning greeting" to "horrified empath" in an instant.

THE MAN
Oh my god. . .

The Man sets the package down, takes off his jacket, and places it over the gruesome scene. He then kneels next to Nala, embracing her.

Nala whimpers, crying her last tears into The Man's chest as he comforts her.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
(hushing Nala)
. . .it's going to be okay. . .

Seeing The Man comforting Nala, when she is almost certain he has done this, is to Charlie almost as horrific a sight as the beheaded chicken.

Manu walks up to the open door where Charlie his beginning to stand.

MANU
(dryly)
Holy shit.

CHARLIE
We should probably move it. . . --
right?

Though Charlie was speaking to Manu, The Man interrupts.

THE MAN
I'm happy to do it. Spare you the
trouble.

The Man's helpfulness is creepy in this context.

NALA
Oh, thank you--

THE MAN
And when I'm done, we'll go for a
walk. I can help you clear your
head.

Nala nods, wiping tears from her eyes.

CHARLIE
(wide-eyed, to Manu)
Can I talk to you?

MANU
Can you?

Charlie, not in the mood for a joke, grabs Manu's arm and drags him to one of the bedrooms, closing the door behind them.

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CHARLIE
It was him?

MANU
Charlie--

CHARLIE
This is what I wanted to tell Nala
last night. I read his notebook--

MANU
How did you get his notebook?

CHARLIE
I didn't-- I mean, I didn't take it
or anything. I found it in his room
and--

Manu, disappointed, is about to scold Charlie, but she does not let him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

The point is, I saw a drawing in it that was exactly that -- a chicken with its head cut off. He probably realized I saw it, and he's trying to scare me into keeping it to myself.

MANU

(empathetic, unlike before)

Charlie--you're not making any sense. He doesn't want you to tell anyone what you saw, so he immediately does it in real life, to scare you.

CHARLIE

YES.

MANU

How can you be sure?

CHARLIE

I just know--

MANU

Okay, let's say you know. And, sure, okay, I'm here for you. But how can you prove that he's anything but a guy trying to live a better life, be a better person?

CHARLIE

I-I--okay, there are records. Any crime he committed before, it would be there, on paper.

MANU

Great, go and get them.

CHARLIE

I tried, the records room door is locked.

MANU

Then I guess that's it.

CHARLIE

What? But you said--

MANU

(back to normal self)

I can't give you all the answers,
darling.

Charlie begins to lose hope.

MANU (CONT'D)

What I'm saying is-- if you can't
get the records yourself, find
someone who can and will do so
quietly.

Charlie reads this incorrectly, and begins to ask for his
help. That is not the answer.

MANU (CONT'D)

Ah--ah, and that person is not me.
I do not plan on going anywhere
outside of this sweet, sweet
plastic bubble of ours.

Charlie rolls her eyes, and storms out of the room.

INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM - LATER

Charlie kneels on the ground, fiddling hopelessly with her
closet door. She has locked it, and is trying to prove to
herself that she can unlock it with a few small amateur
tools.

She is not successful.

A knock at her door.

NALA (O.S.)

Charlie?

Charlie tosses the tools into a corner and hops to her feet,
answering the door.

Nala, as expected, is standing there, boasting an expression
akin to a mother who is about to explain to her young child
that she and her father are getting a divorce.

CHARLIE

(breathy)

Hey.

NALA

What're you up to?

CHARLIE
Oh, you know, no good.

Nala chuckles.

NALA
Can I come in?

Charlie nods, and sits casually on her bed, legs crossed.

Nala follows, sitting politely at the edge of Charlie's bed.

NALA (CONT'D)
I wanted to tell you first. . .

CHARLIE
No, --

NALA
Charlie, just listen to me. I've
told him that I want to claim him.

Charlie tries to protest, but again, Nala cuts her off.

NALA (CONT'D)
Earlier, after. . .
--what happened--
He talked me down. I felt like a
completely different person. And
that's when it became clear to me.

CHARLIE
Nala, there is something I need to
make clear to you.

NALA
No, no--

Nala does not want to hear it.

CHARLIE
He's sick.

NALA
(strained)
What do you mean sick?

CHARLIE
He does terrible things--

Nala keeps interrupting.

NALA

I'm not delusional, Charlie, all of these people have done terrible things. That doesn't mean they're going to do it again.

CHARLIE

But he will--he already has.

NALA

Like what? What did he do?

CHARLIE

This morning. That was him. I know it was.

NALA

What? . . .No--no way. What could make you think that?

Charlie lowers her gaze.

CHARLIE

Don't be mad.

NALA

Charlie.

CHARLIE

I might have snuck into his room and read his notebook.

NALA

Oh my god.

CHARLIE

I know--

NALA

And it said, "I am going to brutally kill Nala's favorite chicken?"

CHARLIE

No, not exactly-- well, not at all, really.

NALA

Then what Charlie?

CHARLIE

It was a picture.

NALA

Okay, how do you expect me to believe you?

This statement hits Charlie, this is something Nala has never said to her before, and Charlie had never expected to hear it.

CHARLIE

Because-- I-I'm me. I love you, I am your friend.

NALA

That's not enough.

CHARLIE

What else is there. . ?

NALA

I can't argue with you. I've made my decision. Let me know when you're ready to support me.

Nala leaves the room, Charlie is left, shocked and hurt.

EXT. THE MAN'S HOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

Charlie, emotional, walks up to The Man's house. She does not seem to care whether or not The Man is home, so she knocks confidently on the door.

Man #2 answers, yawning as he opens the door. Once he has opened the door far enough, Charlie storms past him into the house and up the stairs.

MAN #2

Err--hate to break it to ya, but no one's up there.

Charlie stops in her tracks, and reluctantly returns downstairs.

MAN #2 (CONT'D)

If you're looking for Miss. Moody, she's outside.

He points through the house towards the backyard. All the while, Charlie eyes him, unthankfully.

Let us not forget, Charlie does not like the idea of any of the criminals joining her community.

Charlie follows Man #2's finger.

MAN #2 (CONT'D)
It's okay, being a nice guy is a
thankless job.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Woman #1 tends to her recently formed garden. Some seeds have begun to sprout, thin slivers of green poking through the loose dirt towards the artificial sun.

Woman #1 looks tired, but otherwise content.

CHARLIE
I need you to tell me what
happened.

No more pleasantries.

WOMAN #1
I'm not even sure something did
happen.

Woman #1 continues to tend to her garden, trying to tune Charlie out.

CHARLIE
What do you mean? Yesterday you
said "something happened" and now
you're not sure?

Woman #1 stops, setting down her gardening tools.

WOMAN #1
(keeping her eyes low)
Can you just leave me alone?

Charlie ponders this request.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)
I don't even understand why you're
so hellbent on persecuting him.

To Charlie, this is shocking.

CHARLIE
Because--

Does she know why? It started as a bad feeling, and developed into knowing something is not right with The Man.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
. . .If he is the person I think he
is, and the person I think you know
he is, then he does not belong
here.

This statement seems to affect Woman #1 but she tries to not show it.

Charlie sits on the ground, not paying any care to getting dirty. Suddenly, she realizes how heavy her body feels.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(groaning)
. . .It's clear everyone thinks I'm
crazy.

Woman #1 looks up, sympathetic for Charlie. Because, in fact, Woman #1 does know what Charlie is talking about. It is simply too difficult for her to process.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Even you, who I was so sure would
understand where I'm coming from

Charlie shakes her head.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
. . .you don't see it...

Charlie is processing the possibility of being powerless in this situation.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I don't know what else there is to
do. . .

Woman #1 breathes in a deep, shaky breath.

WOMAN #1
(eyes welling with tears)
There was a night-- I thought he
cared about me, understood me. . .

Charlie listens intently, hopeful of the result of this confession, but concerned for Woman #1.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)
We--stuff happened. I only remember
flashes. . .

Woman #1 takes a pause, then continues.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)
We were intimate. I remember trying
to stop it, but--

Both women's eyes well with tears. Charlie holding it
together for Woman #1, while Woman #1 releases fully into the
confusion and pain of her memory.

CHARLIE
That's--I'm so--

Woman #1, fully crying now, waves her hand, indicating to
Charlie there is nothing to say that would do anything to
help her.

They sit momentarily in silence, until:

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
This is why. We've worked so hard
to make the best of what's left of
our world. And I want to keep it
that way.

Woman #1 wipes her damp face.

WOMAN #1
What do you need me to do?

CHARLIE
Do you have any idea how to
inconspicuously open a locked door?

WOMAN #1
No, if I did I would have said so
yesterday.

CHARLIE
Yeah well, do you know anyone that
does? Ideally someone who will keep
it to themselves if they help up.

WOMAN #1
Hmm. . .what about someone who's
dumb enough to think it's something
they're *supposed* to be doing?

CHARLIE
That could work.

INT. BASEMENT - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Man #2 works to unlock the RECORDS room door using some small tools. He does this like he's tying his shoelaces -- with ease.

MAN #2

Almost there--You're sure I'm
supposed to be doing this--right?

Woman #1, there with Man #2 alone, nods.

WOMAN #1

They knocked on the door earlier
when you were asleep and I said I'd
pass on the message.

MAN #2

Hm, I've never been such a heavy
sleeper before. . .

WOMAN #1

(lying)

Yeah, I heard you snoring. Maybe
it's the change in environment.

Man #2 seems to be nearly done, then, CLINK--CLUNK. The door pops open.

MAN #2

There you go.

Man #2 wipes his hands on his pants.

MAN #2 (CONT'D)

Damn, I wish my hands didn't get so
sweaty. . .Should I be going to
tell someone or something?

WOMAN #1

Uh--no, I told them I would. You're
all good to go.

MAN #2

Alright, pleasure doing business.

Man #2 reaches his hand out to Woman #1 for a handshake. She crinkles her mouth and brow in distaste.

WOMAN #1

Ah--you know, I'm good.

She is referring to his sweaty hands comment.

MAN #2
Right, probably a good decision.
See ya later Allie-Gator.

Man #2 heads upstairs, then pauses.

MAN #2 (CONT'D)
Hey! Maybe I'll call you Allie.

WOMAN #1
That's a hard no.

Man #2 nods, sort of vacantly but in good spirits. He exits completely up the stairs.

Charlie steps out cautiously from behind some storage down the hallway. She approaches Woman #1.

CHARLIE
You didn't mention he was chatty.

WOMAN #1
I generally try my best to tune it out, so it's not something I'd think to remember.

Both Charlie and Woman #1 glance into the now open "records" room.

CHARLIE
Let's make this quick.

The women enter the room, closing the door behind them. They begin opening drawers, flicking through folders, searching for the one with The Man's augur.

WOMAN #1
I'm not finding it.

CHARLIE
Just keep looking.

They continue, quickening their pace. They know the longer they stay, better the chance someone will find them.

Charlie sees an augur she recognizes, it is Woman #1's file. She considers sneaking a peek, but decides against it.

Then, suddenly:

WOMAN #1
Got it--I found it!

Woman #1 turns to Charlie, wide-eyed.

CHARLIE

We probably shouldn't read it here.

Both women star at the closed file.

WOMAN #1

Yeah, you're probably right. . .
Let's go.

Woman #1 begins to depart, Charlie is hesitant, turning to look at all the files -- secrets -- she will be leaving behind.

CHARLIE

I could, you know. Look and see who else might now belong. . .

WOMAN #1

But that's not the point, remember?

Woman #1 grabs Charlie's shoulder.

WOMAN #1 (CONT'D)

I am someone who might not belong,
but I deserve a chance. If you knew
what I've done, you might not have
wanted me to come. But here I am,
helping you.

Charlie, seeing how ignorant she has been, does something rare:

CHARLIE

You're right, I'm sorry.

Woman #1 squeezes Charlie's shoulder, warmly, before turning to continue through the door.

Charlie turns to close the door, and though she believes it to have latched, it POPS open, leaving a sliver of space between the door and its frame.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Charlie and Woman #1 exit the Community Center. Both women are paranoid, uncertain of their ability to lay low.

Neither of their home are great options for reading the file, so they survey the area.

A few people here or there -- Organizers escorting Newcomers, Community Members milling about -- the mood is quite mellow for all other than these two.

Woman #1 notices a tool shed off to the side of the Community Center.

WOMAN #1
(to Charlie)
There?

CHARLIE
I guess that's our best option.

INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

The women climb into the shed and find a way to sit uncomfortable next to each other.

Charlie opens the file and they both pour their eyes over the wealth of information before them.

They read about The Man and his crimes.

INT. NALA'S HOUSE - LATER

Charlie and Woman #1 storm in, looking for Nala. Once again, she is nowhere to be seen.

The last place they go is Charlie's room, where she finds Manu.

Charlie walks in hot, Woman #1 lingers back in the doorway.

CHARLIE
What are you doing in here, where
is Nala?

MANU
Charlie--she's gone with him to
make her claim official.

CHARLIE
Where?

MANU
They met up at the Community
Center, but I think they were
leaving from there.

CHARLIE
What? We were just there, we didn't
see-

MANU
Charlie.

CHARLIE

What?

MANU

You've got to let this go. You're going to get both you and her sorry ass in trouble.

CHARLIE

But I got it, I have his file-- look, see!

Charlie pulls the file out of her bag and gestures it towards Manu. He regards it, but does not touch it.

MANU

Don't show me that. I can't be a part of this anymore. If I were to get caught for any of this--you know what that would mean for me.

CHARLIE

Fine--you're not involved--but it's not a crime to tell me where they are.

Manu hesitates. Charlie gives up, and turns to leave.

MANU

I believe the Committee must approve all claims.

Charlie nods, thankful. She now knows exactly where she is going and continues past Woman #1.

As Woman #1 turns to follow Charlie, she notices something in the room across from Manu's that she had not seen when they arrived.

It is her floral painting, covered partially by wrappings, resting on the floor against the bed frame. It seems that the gift The Man brought Nala the other day was Woman #1's painting.

Woman #1 says nothing, but still finds herself emotional at the sight of it.

EXT. SELF-DRIVING CAR - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

The self-driving car emerges from the Community and speeds out to the main road.

EXT. ORGANIZING COMMUNITY - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

The self-driving car with Charlie and Woman #1 inside approaches a new Community bubble.

This bubble encompasses a small rural town rather than a housing complex or farm area like the other Communities.

The first set of doors open, allowing the car to enter the decontamination space.

INT. ORGANIZING COMMUNITY - CONTINUOUS

Once the car pulls through the second set of doors, several COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS approach it.

The car pulls off to the side of the entrance. Charlie and Woman #1 exit the car, and meet the Organizers.

Just like those at the subway station in the city, these Organizers have scanning devices prepped and ready to confirm Charlie's and Woman #1's identities.

Charlie, expecting this, steps up to one comfortable and they scan her arm. Woman #1 looks nervously to Charlie; Charlie nods, indicating it will be okay.

Charlie's scan results in a pleasant beep and a soft green light. Woman #1's scan makes a different sounding tone, and glows red.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 4

(to Charlie)

This one is not authorized to enter.

CHARLIE

But I'm here to claim her, I wasn't told--

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 4

In that case, we will escort you to the Committee.

Woman #1 looks at Charlie, surprised. Charlie shrugs--it seemed to be the only option.

EXT. COMMITTEE BUILDING - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

The group walks up the street. Woman #1 speaks quietly to Charlie, such that the Organizers will not hear.

WOMAN #1

Is this government or? I've never done well with the people who make the rules, so I'm kinda freaking out.

CHARLIE

No, they're more like guides. People make their own decisions, but the Committee and the organizers are like guides--resources.

Woman #1 nods, still uncomfortable.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

There's nothing to worry about, trust me.

Charlie smiles, reassuring.

INT. COMMITTEE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The Organizers walk Charlie and Woman #1 into the lobby of an old City Hall building.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 4

Wait here, they are overseeing another claim. It shouldn't be long.

Two of the Organizers leave, and one stays.

Charlie stares intently at the double doors leading into the room where Nala and The Man are likely to be presenting their case to the Committee.

She looks between the Organizer, the double doors, and Woman #1 -- who furrows her brow, unable to read Charlie's anxiety.

Charlie's vision blurs, and she makes her decision. Casually, hoping not to alarm the Organizer, she turns and walks through the double door. The Organizer sees this.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER 5

Miss, please wait--

INT. COMMITTEE MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Through her fuzzy eyes, Charlie can distinguish a panel of a diverse group of individuals -- young, old, men, women, and children -- sitting at a long table like a Supreme Court. These people appear kind, not intimidating.

Standing before them, as Charlie expected, are Nala and The Man.

Charlie can see the now blurrier figures turning their attention to her, observing her like a foreign invader.

Charlie stumbles up to Nala, and Nala's face finally begins to come into focus.

NALA
(muffled)
What? What is it?

THE MAN
(muffled)
She doesn't seem well--

Suddenly, Charlie's senses return to her completely. Her expression hardens, and she hands the file out to Nala, who takes it into her hands like it is a fragile wisp, and not the sturdy folder that it is.

By now, the Organizer and Woman #1 have entered the room and are standing behind Charlie.

COMITTEE MEMBER 1, an older woman, breaks the silence.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1
What is your name dear?

CHARLIE
Charlie.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, a 12-year-old boy, chimes in.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2
Speak your truth, Charlie.

It takes Charlie a long moment to commit.

CHARLIE
This man--
(referring to The Man)
Is not fit to join us.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1
And why is that?

Charlie turns to Woman #1.

WOMAN #1

(shakily)

He assaulted me, no more than a few
mights after we arrived at the
community, under the pretense of a
romantic relationship--uh, m'am.

Committee Member 1 appears sympathetic to Woman #1.
Meanwhile, Nala has been reading through The Man's file, and
is becoming gradually more and more distressed.

CHARLIE

I also believe that he
intentionally killed one of our
farm animals.

The Committee Members whisper amongst one another.

Charlie meets The Man's eyes for the first time since she's
entered the room. He appears surprisingly confident, nearly
smiling.

This time, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3, a middle-aged man, speaks.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

And you're sure of this?

Charlie, now concerned about what The Man might do, hesitates
momentarily before nodding affirmatively.

More whispering from The Committee.

Nala, who has just finished reading the file, looks up at The
Man in disgust.

NALA

You're. . .horrid--a Monster.

Nala backs away from The Man, moving closer to Charlie.

THE MAN

I never said I wasn't.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

It is this Committee's ruling that
the claimed and the claimer will
face dismissal and be relocated to
the nearest city center.

CHARLIE

Wait--what?

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Your friend's request to claim this man has already been approved. Our rules are clear, no claim should occur unless the claimer is absolutely willing to face the consequences of any crimes committed by those they claim.

Nala looks at Charlie in fear. One of the Committee Members steps out of the room.

Nala and Charlie embrace each other, crying.

The Committee Member returns with several Organizers. They're here to take away Nala and The Man.

Two of the Organizers step up, gently pulling Nala and Charlie apart. As they escort Nala and The Man away, Charlie is left standing alone, distraught.

INT. COMMITTEE MEETING ROOM - FIVE MINUTES EARLIER

We return to the moment when Nala asks Charlie:

NALA

What? What is it?

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

What is your name dear?

CHARLIE

Charlie.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, a 12-year-old boy, chimes in.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

Speak your truth, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I-I wanted to be here to support my friend. I hope I made it in time.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

We were just wrapping up--

The Man interrupts.

THE MAN

While we're here, I have some truth to speak.

The Committee Members glance at one another.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

Go on.

The Man paces over closer to Woman #1, which causes her to cower back towards the nearest wall.

THE MAN

I would like to bring your attention to this lovely woman here. Though she has chosen to make me face my crimes, she has yet to face her own.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Your point, young man.

THE MAN

This woman told me plainly and without remorse that she has been stealing from other households in the community for her own personal enjoyment.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

(to Woman #1)

Is this a fact?

Woman #1 begins to cry, but then stops abruptly. Hardening, as if finding part of herself again.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

The truth, dear.

WOMAN #1

Yes, it's true.

Again, hushed conversation between the Committee.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

We value your honesty, but it leaves us with little choice.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

You are to return to the city.

CHARLIE

Wait, I intend to claim her!

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

I am afraid she is no longer eligible for claiming.

The Man approaches Charlie and hands her a file he had been concealing in his jacket.

THE MAN

This should give you comfort. I know you would never have wanted someone like her to become one of us.

The "us" stings.

Charlie recognizes the file as belonging to Woman #1. It is the same one that she had seen earlier in the Records Room.

Charlie flips through the file, reading of Woman #1's crimes. Though she cannot absorb every word on the page, the words "BRUTAL MURDER OF FATHER" stand out.

Several Organizers arrive and prepare to escort Woman #1 out.

Charlie approaches The Man, pushing the file against him.

CHARLIE

This -- means nothing to me.

She turns away from him, towards the Committee.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

May I make a request?

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

What is it, dear?

CHARLIE

I would like to join her and live in the city.

Alarmed whispering amongst the Committee.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

That is a strange request, but we are willing to grant it, if that is what you desire.

NALA

(emotionally)

Charlie!

Woman #1 observes anxiously.

WOMAN #1

You shouldn't--

CHARLIE

It is what I desire.

Committee Member 2 nods to the Organizers, and they escort her out alongside Woman #1.

NALA
(desperately now)
Charlie!

The Man holds Nala back from running after Charlie, and Charlie does not look back.

THE END